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TO THE GREAT CITY OF NEW YORK THE WALDORF-ASTORIA PRESENTS AN ASPECT DIGNIFIED AND BEAUTIFUL

(From a drawing by Ruyl)

The Story of The Waldorf-Astoria

— Edward Hungerford

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
I.—New York—and Her Earlier Hotels	3
II.—The Waldorf is Planned—and George C. Boldt Enters These Pages	24
III.—The Waldorf Comes Into Existence	40
IV.—The Christening of The Waldorf	56
V.—The Waldorf Begins to Find Itself	72
VI.—The Bradley-Martins Give a Party—and a Great Chinaman Comes to Visit America	101
VII.—The Coming of The Astoria	126
VIII.—The Waldorf-Astoria Begins Its Career	151
IX.—A New Captain Comes Upon the Bridge	171
X.—The Waldorf-Astoria of Today	205
XI.—Behind the Scenes in a Big Hotel	242
XII.—The Future of the Waldorf-Astoria	276

ILLUSTRATIONS

FACING PAGE

To the Great City of New York the Waldorf-Astoria Presents an Aspect Dignified and Beautiful . . . . . *Frontispiece*

The Late George C. Boldt 30

"Oscar" of the Waldorf—He Needs no Other Title 44

General Coleman Dupont—A Well Known American Financier who has Interested Himself in the Waldorf-Astoria of Today . . 54

The Commanding-General of the Waldorf of Today, Lucius M. Boomer 76

When the Waldorf Stood Alone. The Fifth Avenue of the Early Nineties 88

Fifth Avenue View from Thirty-fourth Street Looking South (1885) with the Funeral Procession of General U. S. Grant Passing the Two Astor Homes and Their Garden Wall (Right) 96

The Bradley-Martin Ball 112

Menu Card of a Dinner to Governor Theodore Roosevelt 138

FACING PAGE

Menu Card of a Dinner to a Famous American, the Honorable John Hay 139

The Famous Coach "Viaduct," at the Portals of the Original Astoria 154

A Detail of the Astor Gallery 155

The Menu Card of the Dinner to H. R. H. the Prince of Wales 180

Dining-List for a Banquet to Field Marshal Kitchener 181

President Harding Leaving the Waldorf-Astoria (1921), Oscar in Attendance 196

Menu Card of the Great Banquet Given to Ambassador Jusserand 212

The Cover of the Dining-List, Banquet to Field Marshal Foch 213

Dinner Card for General Pershing 236

Menu of the 1919 Banquet to Cardinal Mercier 237

The King and Queen of Belgium—Honored Guests of the Waldorf-Astoria 248

General Pershing Reviewing the Victory Parade from a Balcony of the Waldorf-Astoria . 270

The Story of The Waldorf-Astoria

The Story of The Waldorf-Astoria

CHAPTER I

NEW YORK—AND HER EARLIER HOTELS

In the spring of the year 1890 the rumor went through the streets of New York town that William Waldorf Astor was going to live in England; that he had planned definitely to shake the dust of America from his feet—for the rest of his life. The death of his father, John Jacob Astor, son of William B. Astor, and grandson of the founder of the fortunes of the family, had made this migration possible. And having been made possible, William Waldorf Astor—or as he is generally called, Waldorf Astor—decided to take immediate advantage of it. He planned

to close at once his great house at the corner of the Avenue and Thirty-third Street and tear it down to the ground.

His father had builded that comfortable red-brick house, less than twenty years before. In it both his grandfather and his father had died. There are few New Yorkers who today can recall William B. Astor; a good many, however, have vivid recollections of that John Jacob Astor who was Waldorf Astor's father, and who called himself John Jacob Astor, Jr.: a fine, vigorous old gentleman who passed up and down the Avenue each day with such a regularity that not a few took to the habit of setting their watches by his comings and his goings. His offices, which for a long time were in Prince Street, had been moved north into Twenty-sixth Street. Up almost until the day of his death Mr. Astor retained the habit of spending full business hours at them. He took great pride in the personal supervision of his estate.

John Jacob Astor, Jr., was an unusually cultivated and scholarly man. In his veins ran the blood of old New York. His mother was Miss Alida Armstrong, a member of one of the oldest

of the Knickerbocker families. He stood to the tradition in his marriage to a Miss Gibbes, granddaughter of Vanden Heuvel, one of New York's first wealthy Dutch merchants of the Colonial period. The Astors almost always have held a powerful respect for tradition.

*

The decision of Waldorf Astor to quit New York was the nine-days' talk of the town. Folk asked each other what would become of his town house there at the Thirty-third Street corner. It was a certainty that there never would be a tenant in the place. The Astors have never been in the habit of permitting their own homes to slip into decline—into shops or boarding houses or remodeled apartment dwellings. . . . What, then, *was* to become of the big brick house—more important still, of the plot of land of increasing value that it occupied?

Rumor—ever accommodating—quickly circulated the intelligence that Waldorf Astor planned to build a huge hotel on the site of his house. "It is to have all of five hundred rooms," ran the report, "—five hundred rooms and more than half of them with private baths". . . Other

hints were thrown out as well of a tavern to be builded with an elegance and a finesse such as neither New York—nor, for that matter, any other city, on either side of the Atlantic—had yet known. "One certainly would expect the Astors to do the thing handsomely," was the general comment.

Yet New York did not take the rumor too seriously. At any rate, not just at that time. The city already was well enough supplied with hotels—so all the wiseacres said. Think of fine houses like the Windsor and the Murray Hill! Think of that lordly group of hotels around-about Madison Square—the Fifth Avenue, the Brunswick, the Hoffman House! And that other group at the southeast corner of Central Park—the New Netherland, the Savoy, the Plaza—just completed or awaiting completion! Great hotels, each of these . . . great the new Imperial, the Victoria and the Holland House! A new one to be added to all of these—one of five hundred rooms—and at the quiet residential corner of Fifth Avenue and Thirty-third Street. . . . Bosh!

That an Astor would stoop to hotel-building

was taken neither credibly nor kindly by some of the older New Yorkers. They maintained that if the Waldorf Astor residence must come down, the memory of his father would be commemorated in some more dignified way, such as the building of a church or a museum or an art gallery. These folk branded the proposed hotel as outrageously commercial gossip!

Gossip or no, Waldorf Astor paid not the slightest heed. Whatever his plans were, he went quietly and steadily ahead with them. . . . Other men—the men of vision who in 1890 could faintly see the New York of twenty or thirty years in the future—said that they hoped that he would build his new hotel. Despite all of the fine taverns of the town—even these newest ones that had just been completed—there would be room for more. The success, almost from the outset, of the Imperial and the Holland House seemed to justify such a prophecy.

*

There always is room for progress. In this New York of the beginning of the nineties, the old-fashioned American tavern—no matter how elaborate it might really be—was rapidly slip-

ping into desuetude. The very extravagance of its wasteful methods of catering was reacting against it. As a national sport, gorging one's stomach was beginning to pale. A new sort of American—a man who thought less of food and more of exercise—was coming to the fore. As a nation we were slowly arriving at the conclusion that a breakfast might reasonably consist of less than four courses; and that beefsteak was not absolutely essential as one of them. The rapid advent of the quick-lunch restaurant and its counter was proving that the mid-day meal might be reduced to a function of comparatively moderate dimensions and send a man into his afternoons refreshed and set up anew, rather than sleepy and soggy with overeating.

Dinner still hung on rather courageously, however. The so-called "good eater" had somewhat better excuses for retaining it as at least the one fairly heavy meal of the day. Yet the evening repast was not entirely immune from the simplifying process in the American dietary. It, too, was having its girthy proportions reduced. Oysters, a soup, a fish, a single roast, one or two vegetables, a salad and a sweet, were the outside

dimensions that thoughtful men were permitting it to retain—there at the beginning of the nineties. Any one, or even all of the first three, courses might be omitted. And we were beginning to hear of the terrifying totals of the calories, particularly in sweets and in various forms of cheese.

Back of all this came the very first slight insidious advances in food costs here within the United States. Very subtle, but very sure. Few of the hotel-keepers of that period of more than forty years ago worried very much about calories or scientific dieting, or that sort of thing. The butcher's bill and that of the grocer and the fishmonger were far closer to their understandings. When these began to rise they began in turn to look upon that enormously padded American-plan bill-of-fare of theirs of yesteryear with coldly critical eyes.

Remember that it was still more than a decade ahead of the footsteps of the efficiency expert. He was yet to make his advent. But even in that benighted age of the nineties there were ledgers and such things as debits and credits to be reckoned with all the while. And so it came

to pass that slowly, but again surely, the ancient American-plan bill-of-fare underwent change. The changes invariably were those of elimination. Yet denuded of its fearfully top-heavy offering of all but the seemingly necessary dishes, it still was an economic waste. As such its days were numbered.

*

Even back before 1890 the so-called European-plan hotel (as a matter of fact most of the smaller hotels, at least in Europe, now incline to the fixed-price meals, but of a simplicity quite unknown in mid-Victorian America)—offering a wide variety of dishes but with a separate price set upon each of them—had obtained a fairly good foothold in the United States. Houses, like Parker's in Boston, and the Brunswick and the Hoffman in New York, already had upbuilded a large reputation in this form of catering. They had established clienteles who showed a decided preference for the a-la-carte type of restaurant meal.

The American plan died hard, nevertheless. Even today it is not dead in this country—particularly is this true outside of New York City

—although its more wasteful features have very largely been eliminated. In the New York of the nineties it still stood steadfast. Up to the day —in 1907—that it finally closed its doors (to disappear in favor of a huge office building), the famous Fifth Avenue Hotel stuck by that plan. It was the *doyen* of New York hotels. When it conceded a small and extremely modest European-plan restaurant upon its street floor it felt that it had done quite enough. It still maintained as its chief feature its great American-plan dining-room upon the second floor, with the imperturbable Tom Gay at its door. It liked its traditions, and it stuck by them. Even though the first passenger elevator in all the land was installed within the Fifth Avenue, it was ever the foe of a too rapid modernity.

*

For much more than a century past New York has been known as a town of good taverns—as well as of tavern-keepers well skilled in their profession. Yet the history of its public hospitality goes back nearly three centuries; to be exact, to 1642, when the burden of increasing travelers

coming to the tiny settlement of New Netherland having become so great as to have become a real problem to the Dutch West India Company, its directors commanded Director-General Peter Kieft to build a tavern in the town. This he did forthwith. Near what is now the intersection of Pearl Street and Coenties Slip he builded the sturdy stone structure that in after years became known as the Stadt Huys.

The immediate success of this first tavern upon the island of Manhattan led Martin Krigier in the following year to build his Krigier's Tavern, facing the Bowling Green. Krigier's house came into an instant popularity. It attained a fashionable distinction. Visitors from overseas vied with the townsfolk in resorting to it. In after years, and when the English had supplanted the Dutch as the rulers of New York, this early house was known as the Kings Arms. As the headquarters of General Gage it played no small part in Revolutionary history. While for years after the Peace of Yorktown it enjoyed a peaceable old age as the first of several historic Atlantic Gardens upon Manhattan Island.

Success begets imitators. To the Stadt Huys and Krigier's was added presently a group of little taverns, whose very names have now passed out of history. Peter Stuyvesant saw in this growing new industry a fresh source of taxation for funds for the colony. In 1776 he compelled all taverns to be licensed. Six wine and four beer taverns were given their licenses. The rates of their charges were regulated as follows: Lodging, three and four pence a night; meals, eight pence and one shilling; brandy, six pence a gill; French wines, fifteen pence a quart; rum, three pence a gill; cider, four pence a quart; beer, three pence a quart; mum, six pence a quart. There were restrictions in regard to the selling of liquors. It was especially forbidden to sell strong drinks to Indians. If an Indian was found drunk in any of the streets of the town, the tavern-keeper who sold him the liquor was fined, and roundly. When it could not be discovered which tavern-keeper was guilty, all the residents of the unfortunate street in which the drunken Indian was discovered were assessed to make up the amount of the fine.

*

The first tavern upon Manhattan Island to acquire a lasting fame, however, was Fraunce's, which still opens its hospitable doors at the corner of Pearl and Broad Streets. Originally it was the home of one of the DeLanceys who built it in 1730. Thirty-two years later along came Samuel Fraunce, who bought the fine brick house and transformed it into a tavern, then known as the Queen Catherine. It was the finest public-house that New York had ever known. It fairly transcended the imagination of the town. Its popularity was instant. To it came all the great receptions and balls of the elect. In its day it was a regular Waldorf-Astoria. There several societies met for their Saturday night convivialities and there it was that for many years the Chamber of Commerce maintained its headquarters. Washington made it his headquarters, and they will show you today under its venerable roof the Long Room in which he took farewell of his officers in 1783, with a memorable address.

For Fraunce's Tavern has never really closed its doors. Today it is one of the landmarks of New York, as well as a lunching place of real

excellence. New Yorkers have a sort of pious adoration for this ancient tavern, while to its doors there comes a steady stream of pilgrims from every corner of the United States. Under the skilled and loving care of the Sons of the American Revolution it has been carefully restored and preserved. It is, in many ways, the great historic shrine of American hotel-keeping.

*

Another DeLancey homestead—this one standing in Broadway, just north of Trinity Churchyard—served in its declining years as an early New York hotel. It did not go the even tenor of the way of Fraunce's. Instead it experienced many vicissitudes; had many changes of name and of proprietor. Yet it, too, played a large part in Revolutionary history. It was the rendezvous of the Sons of Liberty and, after the coming of the British occupation, a place much favored by army officers. But its chief claim to fame, perhaps, comes from the fact that its site in 1793 became the site of the City Hotel, which for the next thirty or forty years was to be ranked as New York's most favored and important hostelry. An honor, which like that

of social leadership, is almost invariably of a limited tenure.

The list of New York's hotels was lengthening. The town was growing. The Revolution passed, its expansion was astounding. It became a city, a metropolis. It wanted to look citified, metropolitan. So it had many hotels beside the lordly City, in those after-Revolutionary days; the Bull's Head in Bowery (long years ago supplanted by the Bowery Theater, which for more than half a century has had the venerable distinction of being New York's oldest playhouse) and the Merchants' Coffee House, at Water and Wall Streets, are two of the houses of this period whose names still stick in memory.

Yet all of these were as nothing when came the thirties, and the new United States Hotel at Fulton and Pearl Streets (they called it "Holt's Folly," because of the unparalleled audacity of the man who built it) and the Astor House in Broadway, at the apex of the City Hall Park, at that time unsullied by the monstrosity of a Federal post office that now occupies it. Of the first Astor House more in a following chapter. We are taking up the hotels of a

New York of a century ago—when hotel-keeping in the growing town was first beginning to become a real business.

*

As the town grew, its hotels grew. No longer were they to be known as mere taverns or inns, even though a house of blessed and comparatively recent memory was the Golden Eagle Inn, just behind the Broadway Central Hotel, which, itself, positively refuses to disappear from the face of Manhattan. But a tavern like French's Hotel—which once stood on the site of the present World Building in Park Row but which today is all but forgotten—had a much more impressive sound. People liked the very rhythm of that word—hotel. It seemed to connote both size and dignity. Hotel—a great house—that was the caper. Hotels they all became and hotels the great public houses of New York have continued to remain.

Hotels multiplied. There came the huge red-brick Metropolitan in Broadway at Prince, successfully operated so many years by the Leland family. To steal a phrase from Irvin S. Cobb, it had a dining-room apparently only slightly

smaller than the state of Rhode Island. But its position of acclaim seemed to rest in the fact that in its courtyard it housed Niblo's Garden—a New York theater which came to a peculiar sort of fame when the *Black Crook,* the first of all spectacular burlesques, was produced upon its stage.

A little way above the Metropolitan in Broadway stood the St. Nicholas, of which Washington Irving said, "As a hotel it couldn't be beat," and above the St. Nicholas, the Sinclair and the St. Denis, both of which operated up until a very few years ago. The St. George in Twelfth Street had a Broadway frontage but it always preferred to keep its entrance in the side street. For many years it had an unusual distinction in New York in the fact that it elected voluntarily not alone to operate without a bar but without the sale of liquors in any form whatsoever.

The hotels continued to climb up Broadway. Came the Continental, the Fifth Avenue and the Hoffman—to which reference already has been made—the Victoria, which leaped into fame because President Grover Cleveland delighted always in stopping there, the Gilsey, run with a

peculiar excellence by the late James H. Breslin, the Grand, the Normandie—after that the Broadway of forty years dropped off into comparative nothingness.

*

For many years Broadway remained the street unrivalled and almost undisputed for hotel location. Gradually, however, a change began to come about. To the almost ceaseless traffic of that backbone thoroughfare of Manhattan was added the street railway which Alderman Jake Sharp succeeded in putting through it in 1884 and went to Sing Sing Prison therefor in consequence. With the coming of the street-cars in Broadway, congestion was piled upon congestion.

Fifth Avenue had no street railroad. And, a half a century ago, no congestion whatsoever. At that time it had attained a firm social cachet as a residential street. For the construction of the highest type of metropolitan hotel it offered a fair field. The Fifth Avenue, finished in 1859, was the first important house to spring up along it. The Hoffman, seven years later, the second. And then, a very few years afterward, the Bre-

voort. Oddly in the flight of years it is today the Brevoort that alone remains of this famous trio. Although almost a mile south of the sites of the Fifth Avenue and the Hoffman, it has not only outlived them but promises to remain a high-class hostelry for many years. Much of the social tradition of the New York of a half-century ago still clings to it. Its cuisine is reminded of the days when Sam Ward, the one-time prince of New York epicures, dwelt there. And they will still show you the favorite corner of F. Marion Crawford's uncle, described so minutely in the novelist's *Doctor Claudius.* Clyde Fitch also immortalized the old Brevoort; in his great play, *Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines,* in which Miss Ethel Barrymore, at the very beginning of her career, carried both the town and its hinterland by storm.

*

In Fifth Avenue, above its crossing with Broadway, hotels slowly came. The Brunswick has already attracted my attention and so has the Windsor—a quiet distinguished house which was, upon St. Patrick's Day, 1899, to suffer the cruelest fate that could be allotted a hotel—total

destruction by fire; with a great loss of human life into the bargain. The Buckingham (today just disappeared to make way for a large department-store) had a clientele and a distinction very similar to that of the Windsor. These were practically all the hotels in Fifth Avenue—there at the very beginning of the nineties. The huge cast-iron caravansary that the imagination of the late A. T. Stewart had caused to be erected in Park Avenue between Thirty-second and Thirty-third Streets as a grand home for his women employees, and which became the Park Avenue Hotel, with a most charming courtyard, was close to Fifth Avenue—but was not of it. No more could you call the Grand Union (which gave Simeon Ford, its proprietor, his foundation for a mighty reputation as an after-dinner speaker) or the adjacent Murray Hill of Fifth Avenue. They were—all of them—two blocks distant from Fifth Avenue. . . .

Fifth Avenue was and is and ever will be—Fifth Avenue. Its pre-eminence as a residential street having been dimmed ever so little by rival thoroughfares—Park Avenue, north of the Grand Central Terminal, stands on a proud

footing these days!—Fifth has more than regained her former glory as the *via sacra* of the retail shopper. Milady of Manhattan accords to it her especial favor. Her love for it has never waned. To her, Fifth Avenue was and is and ever will be—Fifth Avenue. To her mankind it is nothing less. It is a woman's street, if you please, and yet it just as truly is a man's street. It is long enough and big enough and fine enough to be a street for all the world—and all the world's sweethearts.

*

In the summer of the year 1890, rumor again went through the highways and the byways of New York town saying that in this rare street William Waldorf Astor was to build a great new hotel—upon the site of his house at the northwest corner of Thirty-third Street. New York even yet did not take the rumor too seriously. It thought of the great new hotels that it had recently acquired and was acquiring—the list of them you have just had, even though in fragmentary form.

But the rumor persisted. It had become known that William Waldorf Astor was going

to live in England for the rest of his days. It became known, too, that other new hotels were to go up in Fifth Avenue—the street that was free from the growing noise and the turmoil and the confusion of Broadway. At Thirtieth Street a new hotel (the Holland House) was definitely announced; at Fifty-ninth at least two more (the Savoy—upon the site of Boss Tweed's ill-fated Knickerbocker Hotel scheme—and the New Netherland) were to join the rather lonely red-brick Plaza of those days. . . .

Perhaps there was something in this Waldorf Astor rumor, after all.

CHAPTER II

THE WALDORF IS PLANNED—AND GEORGE C. BOLDT ENTERS THESE PAGES

William Waldorf Astor was not in the habit of frequenting the hotels of the New York of forty years ago, though with the better-known houses of that day he was by no means unfamiliar.

It should be borne in mind that the New York hotel of the beginning of the nineties made comparatively slight appeal to local patronage. The day of the public dinner had not yet dawned. "We have with us tonight," had not become a phrase so trite and overused as to need the attention of the professional humorists. New Yorkers rarely went to meals at the old-fashioned American-plan houses. To the chance trade from the street the hotel bars made the best appeals. . . . With houses of the Hoffman or the Brunswick

type, the local resident was much more familiar. Simeon Ford's Grand Union, just across from the old Grand Central Depot, had acquired a far-flung reputation for the excellence of its restaurant cuisine; the Continental, at Broadway and Twentieth Street, had an old-fashioned strawberry short-cake that commanded great respect; there were other houses here and there that had specialties for which seasoned New Yorkers resorted from time to time. And of course there were the distinguished restaurants, such as Sherry's, the two restaurants (one downtown, the other uptown) of the Delmonico's, Maillard's tea room—a few other exclusive restaurants receiving a real social recognition.

But remember that the beginning of the nineties was bringing a distinctly new trend in hotel construction and management. The Goelet estate on its property at Broadway and Thirty-second Street was well advanced upon the erection of a distinctly new hotel, of a type considerably ahead of what had yet been attempted in New York. For the management of this new house —it was presently to be called the Imperial— two enterprising and highly successful hotel men,

Messrs. Stafford and Whitaker, were being brought down from the western part of the state. Stafford and Whitaker for a number of years past had been engaged in the conduct of an ancient hotel near the New York Central tracks and station in Buffalo. This old hotel, known for many years as the Mansion House, had attained a wide reputation for the quality of its cuisine and service. Because of this reputation the Goelets brought Stafford and Whitaker to Broadway where they opened the Imperial, in 1892. The house, although then of modest dimensions, was immediately and wondrously successful. It has maintained its high reputation from that day until this.

Almost simultaneously with the opening of the Imperial came that of the Holland House, at Fifth Avenue and Thirtieth Street, under the direction of Charles Kingsley, of oyster fame in Chicago. This hotel, which remained in active operation until a few years ago, also achieved a high reputation for its superlative excellence. In it the reputation of the late Gustave Bauman was made. It became from the first a house of great popularity with folk from the Middle

West. For it its patrons had a lasting affection. . . . Almost simultaneously with these two houses came the elaborate Savoy and the New Netherland upon the two corners of Fifty-ninth Street at Fifth Avenue—and facing Central Park and the original Plaza Hotel.

*

William Waldorf Astor watched all of these new hotel projects from their very inception. He commented upon their possibilities. About the Astor vision in New York real-estate operations a whole group of books might be written. Blessed with a rare sense of initiative and of daring, the Astors have not hesitated to be imitative, when good business demanded the following of an example. . . . If the Goelets could build big hotels, there is no reason why the Astors should not build big hotels. There was a sort of affection for the business itself in the family blood. An Astor of an earlier generation had builded the Astor House at Vesey and Barclay Streets and Broadway. In 1890 the old Astor House was still in the heyday of its prosperity. It had made hundreds of thousands of dollars, both for its owners and its lessees.

And when the steady uptown growth of New York had left it far behind as a high-grade hotel for dinner and rooming trade, the profits of its bar and its lunch-trade still rendered it a highly prosperous institution. There were many old New Yorkers who refused absolutely to be weaned from its circular lunch-counter in its gloomy great lobby. These stuck by the old house until the construction of the second Broadway subway forced the demolition of the south half of the building and the final closing of its doors as a hotel.

*

Astor steadily permitted the idea of a hotel upon the site of his Thirty-third Street house to grow in his imagination. He talked it over at great length with his estate agent, Abner Bartlett, a man by whose experience and judgment he set large store. . . . Mr. Bartlett was another familiar figure in the New York of half a century ago. In the nineties he was known as a real gentleman of the old school; with his grey beard, his invariable stock, his immaculate ruffled shirt and his old-fashioned low-cut vest, he was a noticeable figure upon the Avenue. His com-

mon-sense was as old-fashioned as his apparel. He had both imagination and judgment. Both were forever tempered with a vast sagacity. Into his judgment there entered, even before Waldorf Astor had fully made up his own mind, the determination that a great new hotel should be builded at the Thirty-third Street corner. One day Bartlett bespoke that determination:

"I think that we will build that hotel," he said slowly.

William Waldorf Astor turned his glance toward him. Doubt still ruled him. He was not quite convinced of the entire wisdom of the project.

"It will never pay—there at Thirty-third Street," was his adroit reply.

"Oh, yes," said Abner Bartlett. "It will pay. I have thought the thing all out and I am now positive that it will pay."

Astor was quiet for a few minutes. Finally he turned toward his agent:

"Have you got a man to look after a house like that—if we should decide to build it?"

The agent did not hesitate.

"I have the man," he said quietly.

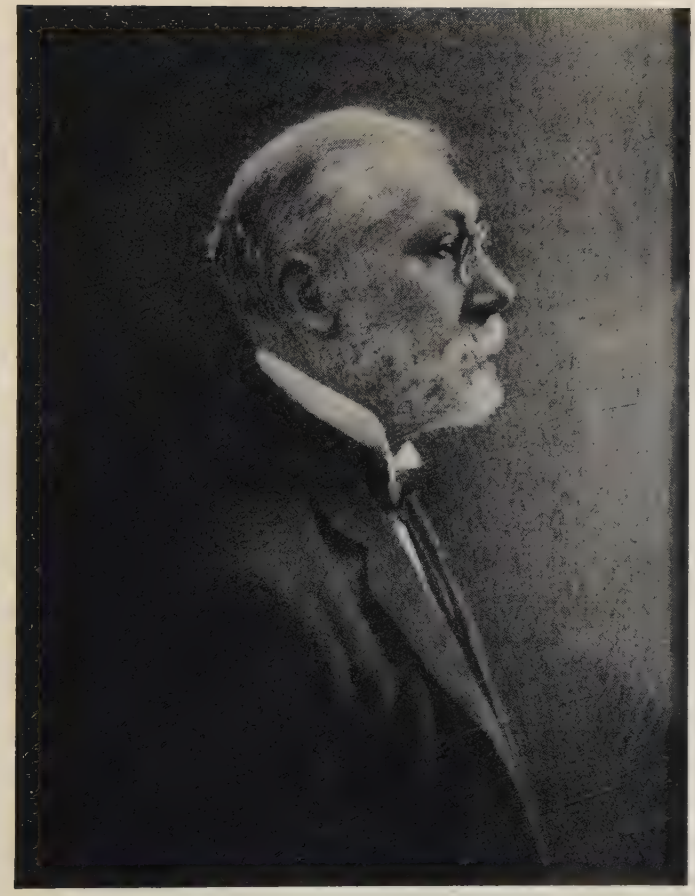
"Who?"

"That man over in the little Bellevue, in Philadelphia—George Boldt."

Astor knew Boldt. The mere mention of his name sent back into his mind an episode at that same Bellevue Hotel—but a few years before. He had come into Philadelphia at a very crowded time. All the larger hotels had refused him. The Bellevue took him in. It was an accommodation not to be forgotten.

Bartlett also knew Boldt; and knew him well. With Mrs. Bartlett he was in the habit of going over to the Bellevue occasionally for a few days' rest and recreation. Upon one memorable occasion Boldt had actually put himself out of his own private suite for the Bartletts—just as in fact he did for William Waldorf Astor. . . . This seemed to be a little way that Boldt had. . . . One of his regular New York customers at one time had written to him saying:

"My wife is in an extremely nervous condition and must get away at once from everything suggestive of her household cares. She doesn't want to go anywhere but to your hotel, and will have nothing but the room that she has occupied



THE LATE GEORGE C. BOLDT

The super mine-host of the tavern

From a portrait by S. G. Hooper)

heretofore. That will not give her the change of scene that she needs but I guess it will have to do. We arrive tomorrow afternoon."

When they did arrive they found that Boldt, within the twenty-four hours after receiving their letter, had completely transformed the room. It was repainted, repapered and equipped with new carpet and furniture. This was Boldt's way of doing things.

At that time there probably was nothing just like the little Hotel Bellevue in Philadelphia, anywhere else in the world; certainly not within the United States. It was a small, neat, compact building of red brick occupying the northeast corner of Broad and Walnut Streets almost directly across from the historic "Yellow House" of the Willings. With its black-slate mansard roof it was, all-told, but four stories in height—it possessed during the greater part of its career but twenty-four sleeping rooms—and it was not until a number of years after Boldt took it over that an elevator was installed within it. Yet it was a homey little place and when, in 1904, it was demolished,—upon the completion of the Bellevue-Stratford upon an adjoining corner—

its passing was sincerely mourned by whole generations of old Philadelphians.

*

It is quite impossible that any true history of the Waldorf-Astoria could ever be written that would not be the story of the life of George C. Boldt as well.

Boldt came from a parentage of frugal, honest-minded, hard-working folk, of no small degree of education and refinement. His father was the caretaker of the tiny island of Rügen in the Baltic Sea, once a part of Denmark and then finally the possession of Prussia. On this island of Rügen George C. Boldt was born, in the year 1853. At the age of sixteen he emigrated to the United States. He landed in New York without a single friend in this whole broad land, and with very little money. Work was his immediate necessity and, because he had neither experience nor friendships, he was compelled to accept the work nearest at hand—in the kitchens of the old-time hotels of the town.

His first job was at the old Merchants' Exchange Hotel, at the corner of Broadway and Chambers Street. From there he shifted to the

Arlington. But he did not stay long in kitchen work. For one reason, he was quite beyond it in every way, and for another, he had contracted a fever which made it extremely necessary for him to leave the city for a time and go out into the country.

He traveled down into Texas. There ill-fortune followed him. A cabin in which he was living was swept away by a swift torrential flood and he left Texas—disgusted—and worked his way back to New York. . . . For a short time, a kitchen again; this time the kitchen of a restaurant. Boldt had no foolish pride. And even though the job that offered itself at Parker's Restaurant, at that time a famous oyster-house and chop-house under the shadows of the Sixth Avenue Elevated Railroad near Thirty-third Street, was not much of a job—helper to the vegetable-cook in the kitchen—it was at least a job. And as such it was taken—thankfully.

Young Boldt did not stay long in the kitchen. His neat ways and his pleasing manners—good blood almost always will tell—caused the management to move him out into the restaurant. There he took the cash and made the coffee,

in a huge urn close beside the cashier's desk. And when he was not making cash or coffee he was making friends—both for Parker's and for George C. Boldt.

Take that little old gentleman who used to come down from Cornwall-on-Hudson two or three days a week and who always ate his lunch at Parker's—sometimes his dinners, too. The little old gentleman was what is sometimes called in the parlance of restaurants and hotels, a "myth." Which, being translated, meant that he was never generous with his *pourboires*. And which meant, in turn, that the opportunity to serve him was not particularly sought by the waiters in the oyster-house.

But Boldt did not see the gentleman from Cornwall as a "myth." He merely saw him as a patron of the house. As such he was entitled to receive the fullest extent of its service. So, when the waiters neglected the little old man, the young cashier took care of him himself.

The little old gentleman took these attentions as a matter of course—apparently. . . . One day he turned abruptly upon the young man who was fussing at the coffee urns.

"Wouldn't you like to run a hotel of your own?" said he, apparently in a most irrelevant fashion.

Young Boldt's eyes sparkled. To run a hotel of his own was the dream of his life. He said so, quite frankly.

"I think that I can arrange it for you," said the little old gentleman. "I own a small house up there which needs a manager."

*

The hotel at Cornwall-on-Hudson was a mere episode in the life of George C. Boldt. It is enough here to say that he not only ran it, but that he ran it so very well that shortly he had an invitation to take charge of a far more pretentious enterprise—the long-established and lordly Philadelphia Club. In Philadelphia there was none to equal this club—in both its cuisine and in the excellence of its service. There were indeed few clubs in the other parts of the land which might assume to equal these points of its management. . . . Both of them were due to the untiring energy of one man—William Kehrer—who, while holding the title of club mana-

ger, was in reality its cook and its steward as well.

Kehrer asked Boldt to join his *menage*. Officially the newcomer was to be head-waiter and assistant to the manager. But, like his chief, he was to fit in, whenever and wherever it was possible.

In those pleasant days of the eighties, then, Boldt moved from Cornwall to Philadelphia and quickly fell in with his new duties. He also fell in love with a woman, the daughter of Kehrer—an unusually sweet and appealing woman. In the course of a few years George C. Boldt married Louise Kehrer. It was an alliance of great strength and of great sweetness.

In due time I shall show you how Mr. Boldt was a man of unusual vision and sagacity. Yet those who stood closest to him in all of his many activities are the first to aver that the greatest of his successes were due to the quick wit and the unfailing good sense of his wife. "I'll ask Louise," was the most frequent response that he gave when important matters were first put up to him for decision. In a coöperation that was hardly short of marvelous to those that really

understood it, this man and his wife worked. Their triumphs were joint triumphs; for jointly they worked in their accomplishment.

*

It was a foregone conclusion that Boldt would not long remain at the Philadelphia Club. You could not keep him from making friends. Many of the friends that he made there in the old club were men of the highest business standing in Philadelphia. . . . At that time a man named Petri conducted the Bellevue, which we have already seen as a little four-storied house of but twenty-four sleeping-rooms standing in South Broad Street, at Walnut. Petri specialized upon the restaurant, rather to the neglect of the rest of the house. The imagination of Boldt pictured the entire establishment as one of the rare possibilities of America—a small hotel, approaching perfection. He confided this idea to two or three of the men in the club. They put him into the place. From the moment that he first took hold of the Bellevue its success was assured. Its fame soon ran far beyond Philadelphia.

Now George C. Boldt really was expanding. The great restaurant in the Bullitt Building, not

far from the Public Buildings, was offered him. He took it, upon lease. In a short time a liability had been turned into an asset. Boldt was serving between three and four thousand lunches a day and one had to go early to the place to be assured of a table. . . . Success piled upon success. Two resort hotels in New Jersey—the Beach House, at Sea Girt, and the Berkeley Arms, at Berkeley—were put into the hands of the man from Philadelphia. He ran them for some seasons, with a degree of success. Yet eventually he pulled out of both of them. When asked the reason he always would shake his head slowly, wink a liquid blue eye very slyly and remark:

"The mosquitoes drove me out."

In those days the state of New Jersey had not begun its extermination of the abominable little pest of the marshes.

*

Always, however, the Bellevue was the pet of George C. Boldt's great heart. Upon it he lavished his most loving care, placed the most infinite attention upon each of its details. Prestige piled upon prestige. To have a room at the

Bellevue when one went to Philadelphia was like being admitted to one of the most exclusive clubs of that tremendously exclusive old city. The Philadelphians, themselves, adored it. They flocked to its cosy restaurants. Their various organizations struggled against one another for the use of its private dining-rooms upon favored nights. Under its hospitable roof was born, forty-two years ago, what was probably the most famous dining club in the land—the Clover Club, for a long time headed by Moses P. Handy. To be bidden to one of its monthly dinners was a real honor; men strove to obtain membership within its ranks. George Boldt conferred upon the organization the greatest compliment within his power by naming his little daughter after it. His affection for the men who ran the Clover Club knew no bounds.

CHAPTER III

THE WALDORF COMES INTO EXISTENCE

Yes, Astor knew Boldt. He closed his eyes and smacked his lips—in memory of those oysters-Bellevue. And gave thought to Boldt's courtesy to him. . . . After a moment he said to Abner Bartlett, his agent:

"You had better go right over to Philadelphia, see Boldt and find out how he feels about the thing."

The next day Bartlett lunched with Boldt at the Bellevue. He made the suggestion about the proposed new house at Thirty-third Street and Fifth Avenue—in its most favorable light. Boldt listened to the recital in a sort of rapt silence. But all that he said was:

"That looks good. But first I must ask Louise."

Mrs. Boldt was asked to join the conference. To her the agent of the Astor estate explained

the plan for the new hotel. Her attention was as sharp as that of her husband. She said:

"Well, George, it is for you to decide. If you think that we can handle it, you will find me at your side just as much over there as I am here."

It is known that the idea of a large New York hotel under his management had already come to Boldt's agile mind. At any rate before Abner Bartlett returned that evening to New York the Boldts had agreed to take the control of the new hotel at Thirty-third Street. Their acceptance made certain its construction.

Within a few weeks thereafter Henry J. Hardenbergh, a New York architect, who was to have a considerable experience in the construction of the modern type of hotel for the big town, was engaged upon the preliminary plans for the William Waldorf Astor hotel—it had not as yet been named The Waldorf. . . . These plans were filed with the New York City Building Department on November 7, 1890. And it was not long thereafter that the Astors had moved out of their comfortable red-brick house and the wreckers were engaged in its demolition.

*

In 1890 Fifth Avenue—particularly that portion of Fifth Avenue between Twenty-third Street and Forty-second—was just beginning to lose rank as an exclusive residential thoroughfare of the highest class. Business was beginning to creep in upon the sacred precincts. A few of the houses were being transformed into small shops. There were no zoning ordinances in those days, save for a small portion of the Murray Hill district—no legal reasons to prevent a man from doing practically what he pleased to do with his property. . . . A few of the big houses of the New York elect still held to the neighborhood; it still was recognized as the ideal location for the very best of the clubs of the town. . . . The home of the exclusive Knickerbocker was still at the Thirty-second Street corner of the Avenue, the popular Manhattan at the Thirty-fourth, the New York at Thirty-fifth, the St. Nicholas at Thirty-sixth. The Union Club had not as yet left its historic home at Twenty-first Street, but the Union League was already ensconced at Thirty-ninth.

Between these clubs and the still sparse sprinkling of shops of the most exclusive sort

were the houses of older New Yorkers; the most notable of all of them, perhaps, the red-brick home of John Jacob Astor at the southwest corner of Thirty-fourth Street. John Jacob Astor was the cousin of William Waldorf Astor. Their two houses stood upon adjoining plots of ground. Their dignified fronts and the garden wall between them may be seen in a photograph in this book. What was in the mind of John Jacob Astor as he heard the racket of the steam shovel in the rapidly growing excavation next door to him probably was: "A hotel? How will it look? Is it a good idea?"

*

It is while they are digging the cellar of the new Waldorf Hotel that a new character enters these pages. One who cannot be gainsaid an entrance. He has earned it. For if ever there was one man identified with the Waldorf-Astoria —next to the late George C. Boldt, himself—it was, and still is—Oscar. Comparatively few people in New York or out of it know him as anything else than Oscar. Yet many people, both in and out of the city, know him and are more than passing proud of the fact. I have

introduced one of the most prominent railroad men in the land to Oscar and afterwards had the big railroader say to me, in the frankness of a great sincerity: "I had rather meet that man than nine out of ten of your so-called big men either here or in Washington. He has all the marks of real bigness about him. . . ."

Oscar's name in full is Oscar Tschirky. He was born a Swiss, a native of the canton of Neuchâtel, not far from the center of that republic. Like Boldt, he also came to New York in the days of his youth, without capital and without friends, but blessed with the rare combination of good health and an indomitable ambition. He arrived in the city at the age of fifteen, but within an hour after his arrival he had applied for his naturalization papers. Oscar's beginnings in New York were strangely like those of George C. Boldt. He progressed rapidly and in the spring of 1891 he was on the staff of the old Delmonico's—then located on Fifth Avenue, Broadway and Twenty-sixth Street—acting both as a head-waiter and as a staff captain in charge of the restaurant's outside catering.

It was on Easter Sunday of that spring that

"OSCAR" OF THE WALDORF—HE NEEDS NO OTHER TITLE

Oscar started on a walk up the Avenue with his father, who had just come on to New York for the first time. At Thirty-third Street they halted to go around a fence that surrounded a deep hole in the ground. Men were at work far below the surface of the street.

"What are they doing here, Oscar?" asked Tschirky, the father.

"Father, they are building a new hotel. I think that William Waldorf Astor is behind the thing."

Oscar's father glanced down into the excavation for a moment.

"I think that it might be a wonderful opportunity for you," he said.

That chance remark bore seed. It rooted deep. The vivid impression that it made upon the mind of the younger man did not lose vividness.

"I thought that I would make the effort to get with the new enterprise and so I did," says Oscar today. "I found out definitely that the Astor estate was to build the new house, which was to be called the Waldorf. . . . Finally I went to its offices in Twenty-fifth Street and found the agent of the estate. He replied that

Mr. Boldt, of Philadelphia, would conduct the new hotel."

A few days later Oscar wrote Boldt. A reply came, saying that it was a little too early for decisions to be made in regard to the personnel for the Waldorf, but if Oscar could produce any letters from people in New York in regard to his standing in the town they might come in handy.

Could Oscar produce such letters? He determined upon a *coup,* far better than that of a mere sheaf of letters. A simply-worded testimonial was drawn up. To it were appended eight foolscap pages of signatures of men who were glad to testify to the personal popularity and the real worth of the most likable captain of the entire Delmonico staff. There were important names among those signatures—men of substance, such as George Gould and Justice Andrews and H. McKay Twombly and Doctors Seward Webb and John P. Munn, to mention a few of many.

Oscar got the job. He seemed predestined to get it. And the foundations of a business connection which was far, far more than any ordinary business connection—a friendship almost

deeper than the ties of common blood—were first laid. Upon that connection a great business enterprise—in many respects a business enterprise almost entirely without precedent—was securely wrought. The two men made magnificent partners. For they became eventually a coöperative team in fact, despite the seeming anomaly that Oscar remained nominally as *maître d'hotel,* Boldt always as proprietor.

The temperaments of the two men were such as to make one the ideal foil for the other. Boldt was always the man who could see every reason for doing a thing that popped into his head. If ever a man had vision it was this same George C. Boldt. . . . "He could stand upon the blueprint plan of a new hotel and see the folks come piling in the front doors," said one of his early associates at that time.

Oscar was the balance-wheel to such a fast-flying imagination. *He* could see the practical reasons for not doing some of the things that his chief suggested. Not that the *maître d'hotel* of The Waldorf lacks vision. A greater untruth could hardly be uttered. But his training and his experience had inclined him to caution. Physi-

cally and mentally he always moved more slowly than Boldt; and yet when occasion demanded, with a rare celerity.

Here was a really tremendous combination. Do and Don't. When it ended a few years ago by the death of one of the two partners to it, the business enterprise that had been erected by it suffered a great shock. If it had not been securely upbuilded it might have fallen. That it stood was due to two things: the thoroughness with which George Boldt and Oscar Tschirky had wrought their fabric—and to the fact that Oscar remained loyally by the old ship.

*

In the late summer of 1891 the gaunt steel framework of the new Waldorf began to show itself over the edge of the tall, tight fence that the contractors had built around the site of the hotel. Mr. Boldt, although never relinquishing the full control of his beloved Bellevue, in Philadelphia, took the house at No. 13 West Thirty-third Street (immediately adjoining the Waldorf site) not only as personal living quarters but also as an office, until the new hotel should be finished. Literally he slept on the job; when

he slept at all. At no time during the long period of construction was he far from it. When he did go, it was either to gain ideas or furnishings for the house. While these last were being supplied in the main by three long-established New York firms of high standing, W. & J. Sloane, Duveen's and Olivotto's, it was the personal taste of Boldt—and Mrs. Boldt—that furnished the little knick-knacks and rare bits of old furniture that gave the hotel its unusual atmosphere, and which remain with it, in large degree, now. That was long before the day of standardization in hotel furnishings; years before some efficiency genius was to evolve the idea of rooms exactly alike on each bedroom floor of the modern hostelry—and furnished alike, down to the smallest detail.

Once Mr. Boldt went overseas in his relentless search for novelties for the Waldorf. He did not like the transatlantic voyage. Almost always he returned from it in impaired health. On the summer after the Waldorf finally was finished and opened, he went to Germany; Oscar went to France. They finally met in Carlsbad.

"I knew that I should find the chief ill," says

Oscar today, in speaking of that trip. "I was right. He was quite ill. I had to return to America alone, while he stayed behind awhile to gain strength for the Atlantic trip."

Novelties, in the Boldt way of thinking, meant not alone furnishings. The cellars of the house were a large responsibility for the proprietor. In those pre-Volstead days his worry was that of a proper selection of fine wines and liquors for his shelves. It was the first hotel in New York to offer to its patrons real vintage wines. On one of his earliest trips to Europe Boldt purchased a huge cave of pints of Pommery, of the vintage of 1858. These sold in the early nineties at the modest price of six dollars each, up to the time when Mr. Bradley-Martin, emulating the Waldorf-Astor example, pulled up stakes in New York to take up a permanent residence in England. He bought all the remaining vintage Pommery in the caves of the Waldorf-Astoria and took it back across the Atlantic with him.

*

I am anticipating. We are building The Waldorf, not stocking it yet. . . . The original intention was to have the house eleven stories in

height. Finally, in deference to a request of Mrs. Boldt, this was increased to thirteen stories. The wife of the proprietor of the new house had a sort of superstitious affection for the number thirteen. She said always that it brought her luck. It seems that it was at 1313 Locust Street, where Boldt had completed a fine new home for his bride, that their oldest child, a younger George Boldt, was born. And a few years later, in a room numbered 13 in the hotel at Berkeley, New Jersey, the daughter, Clover Boldt, had been ushered into the world.

So thirteen stories into the blue skies over Manhattan went the brand-new Waldorf. From the first the idea was to create a hostelry with as little of the typically hotel features in evidence as was humanly possible. There were to be 530 rooms, of which some 450 would be sleeping-rooms. There were to be 350 private bath-rooms; each of these last with an outer window—a feature which alone made a tremendous impression upon the high-grade traveling public of the nineties.

Such pomp! Such magnificence! Such real elegance! Even the glory of such really fine

hotels as the Imperial, which immediately preceded the coming of The Waldorf, the Holland House and the Savoy, seemed to fade a little bit before the mere announcement of the details of the new-comer.

The cost of this magnificence went, for the building itself, at between three and four millions of dollars. It could not be duplicated today, in the quality of every detail of its construction, at twice, if indeed at three times, that figure. . . . It was decided that Boldt should pay the Astor estate five percent annually on the cost of the building, in addition to six percent on the ground valuation—even then in excess of two million dollars. These figures are large today—they were vastly larger at the beginning of the nineties.

*

Construction proceeded slowly through the summer of 1891 and that of 1892. In the latter year it was possible to enclose the uncompleted building to permit the decorators and the furnishings to come into it. But at no time was the construction hurried. Few large buildings in New York have ever been fabricated so deliber-

ately—and so thoroughly. This was one of the few definite wishes of Waldorf Astor. The fundamental plans for the hotel having been finished, in compliance with his announced plan, its owner retired to England, where presently he took British citizenship and became a member of the nobility. The few orders or suggestions that he made in connection with the building of the house were chiefly given by cable. . . . As far as is known he never entered it after its completion but twice; and then but for a few minutes each time. He passed quietly through its corridors and did not lift his eyes from the floor. His modesty at many times came to a bashful embarrassment.

*

So slowly proceeded the original Waldorf to its completion. It had been hoped to have the house open for business in the late fall of 1892, but as autumn came on it was seen that the opening would have to go over until well in the spring. Important as it was to have the great invested capital begin bringing in actual returns, it was recognized by both the lessor and the lessee of the huge property that haste in construc-

tion would be a well-nigh fatal mistake. . . . Haste was not permitted. . . . The house was well builded. And thoroughly. This ideal became an obsession on the part of the men who built it.

Yet finally the hour of completion was at hand. The artisans were at the last touches upon the interior. The decorators were upon their heels. Six hundred thousand dollars had gone into the furnishings alone of the hotel. That was in 1892. If it had been in 1925 the same amount of furnishings probably would have taken twice that sum.

Finally,—it was a particularly wintry day in February, 1893, when a great banner was affixed to the front of the new Waldorf. In great black letters New Yorkers read upon it:

Mr. Boldt announces the opening of The Waldorf, Monday, March 13, 1893. . . . Temporary offices at 13 West Thirty-third Street.

An announcement, worded similarly, was sent out upon neatly engraved cards to every one of social or business prominence in the town. The Waldorf, while offering every elegance, never

GENERAL COLEMAN DUPONT—A WELL KNOWN AMERICAN FINANCIER WHO HAS INTERESTED HIMSELF IN THE WALDORF-ASTORIA OF TODAY

(From a painting by Howard Chandler Christy)

aimed at a snobbish exclusiveness. It was the desire of Mr. Boldt to run the largest fine hotel in all the world and with a degree of service to which no other hotel—large or small—had yet attained. Simply this, and nothing more.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHRISTENING OF THE WALDORF

Pomp and circumstance. The huge Waldorf. The luxurious Waldorf. The glorious Waldorf. How New York—huge, calm, sophisticated New York—gazed and gaped at the splendors of its newest tavern! People flocked to it by the hundreds and by the thousands. They crowded into its Palm Garden, then a particularly bright and sunshiny room, with its glass-court lighted with all the sunshine reflected in from Cousin John Jacob's big place next door. They engaged tables in all of its restaurants days and weeks in advance. They filled its sleeping-rooms. When they could not do any of these things they just came open-eyed to see, and they returned—more open-eyed than before. . . . For these last, professional guides were engaged, probably for the first time in the history of any hotel. These

young men, eloquent of tongue and pleasing of manner, were hired to direct strangers through the hotel and to spare no details of information in regard to it.

*

The actual social christening of the original Waldorf took place on the evening of the fourteenth of March, 1893. For many months it had been anticipated as one of the large social functions of the season. For nearly a year it had been a matter of conjecture and speculation as to just what form this opening function would finally take. There were many rumors that a huge bachelors' ball (a form of entertainment then in great vogue in New York society) would be given. It is said that Waldorf Astor had in mind a ball of some sort or other for the opening, but when he learned that a group of society women who were interested in the St. Mary's Free Hospital for Children were preparing to give a concert for that institution, he impulsively cabled his wishes that the Waldorf on the first evening of its existence as a hotel should be entirely given over to such a concert. Astor did not plan, himself, to attend the opening. As I

have said already, he entered the hotel but twice, and upon each of these occasions he kept his eyes fixed upon the floor, never once lifting them for a single curious look at the side-walls or the ceilings.

Not only was it reported repeatedly that Waldorf Astor was coming to the opening of the new house, there was supposedly authentic gossip that it was his intention to hire a special steamer and come over with a large group of European dignitaries who were crossing to attend the World's Fair at Chicago. (For it must not be forgotten that 1893 was an important year in American history; the World's Columbian Exposition alone would have tended to make it that.) Rumor added that this party of big-wigs from Europe were to stay at the Waldorf for a fortnight before proceeding on to Chicago. . . . Whether or no there was ever such a plan in the Astor mind, the man who was most concerned in it gave it the dignity of a cabled denial. For which he was roundly rapped by a group of newspapers which, from the beginning, had taken umbrage at his renunciation of American citizenship.

*

The hotel opened formally for its guests on a Wednesday—Jonas B. Kissam, a son-in-law of Abner Bartlett, agent of the William Waldorf Astor estate, being the first to sign his name to the register. On the preceding Saturday evening a dinner was given in honor of the executors, trustees, managers and others connected with the management of the estate. Two days later the house underwent a formal inspection by the members of the New York City Hotel Association, while that evening a dinner was given by Mr. Boldt in honor of the architect, Henry J. Hardenbergh. About sixty men, prominent in the professional and artistic ranks of New York, were present. . . . It was characteristic of Boldt's thoughtfulness and utter unselfishness that the first dinner that he gave in the new house should be in honor of another person who was associated with its construction.

The opening concert came on Tuesday evening. A dismal downpour—a sharp March rain was vainly doing its utmost to hinder the party—made the surrounding streets into cascades. But society—the exclusive society of Philadelphia and Boston, and of course that of

Manhattan—refused to stay away, rain or no rain. "The audience, according to all reports, was the most brilliant that New York has ever seen gathered together," said the *Sun* on the morrow, in referring to the affair. "For once interest did not center in the fashionable people," the newspaper account continued. "They were absorbed in surroundings than which there are nowhere in the world any more beautiful and more magnificent. . . ."

The guests were received in the Marie Antoinette drawing-room, which was reproduced almost to the last detail from the apartments of the poor French queen at Versailles. In the receiving line stood a representative row of New York's most distinguished social leaders of that day; the society reporters had a merry time guessing at the sum total of the value of their gowns, as expressed in mere thousands of dollars. From their glowing accounts at this distant day one gains the knowledge that Mrs. Paul Dana wore rich, black satin; Mrs. Richard Irvin, silver grey satin, trimmed with old point-de-Venise lace and diamond and pearl ornaments; Mrs. James Harriman, black satin and gauze,

studded with turquoise, and having sleeves of blue velvet; Mrs. John A. Lowery, black satin, and Mrs. Boldt, pink brocade, trimmed with mauve and lavender bows.

More than fifteen hundred folk crowded into the Waldorf upon that opening night. The list of the notables runs to far further lengths: Mrs. William Jay wore a wonderful mauve satin Empire gown, with a deep bertha of old point lace; Mrs. William Douglas, another Empire gown —of black velvet, also trimmed with old point lace; Mrs. Charles Oelrichs, a mauve satin "1830" gown, with flounces and full skirts (one has only to recall 1893 to remember how very full both skirts and sleeves were); Mrs. Henry Barbey, black satin and velvet, with ropes of pearls; Mrs. Hood Wright, black brocade, with stripes of pale blue figured silk; Mrs. John C. Wilmerding, a black and copper-colored brocade Empire gown with puffed sleeves of copper satin; Mrs. J. J. Wysong, a turquoise blue brocade Empire gown, combined with velvet of a deeper shade and set off by a diamond tiara; Mrs. William Burden, black moire with full skirts and a bodice with puffed sleeves of dark

green velvet and point lace. . . . I desist from going further. I am not a fashion writer; merely the historian of an eminent hotel.

Yet these faded clippings have a great interest. We like to know that among others present were Mrs. Gouverneur Morris, Mrs. Reginald de Koven, Mrs. Chauncey M. Depew, Mrs. Andrew Carnegie, Mrs. Joseph H. Choate, Mrs. George Peabody Wetmore, Mrs. James S. Frick, Mrs. W. Bayard Cutting. . . . Truly a representative list out of the New York society. One wonders if as powerful a group of matrons could be gathered together today for the opening of a hotel, no matter how large or how magnificent its pretensions.

The men came, too. A group of young men —preceding, of course, the uniformed staff of guides—escorted the guests through each nook and cranny of the new Waldorf. Another clipping gives the names of these young men ushers. They included William M. Jay, William Douglas, Theodore Braine, Frederick Frelinghuysen, Nicholas Kane, Alexander Butler Duncan, F. V. S. Crosby, H. B. Hollins, T. F. Cushing, Richard Young, Frank Foster, John C. Fur-

man, Richard Peters, Alexander H. Hadden, A. Murray Young, Richard Irvin, George R. Bend, James Tolfree and Thomas Newbold.

Tickets for this large event, which was given under the direction of Mrs. Richard Irvin, sold at five dollars apiece, which was considered quite a top figure in 1893. Nearly five thousand of them were sold. To the money raised by this individual sale of tickets were added the contributions of William Waldorf Astor and Mr. Boldt—one thousand dollars each for founding a bed at St. Mary's Hospital for employees of the new hotel who might fall ill in the pursuance of their duties.

*

The audience that braved the rain and came to the formal opening of New York's newest toy was so huge as to quickly overflow the Waldorf ballroom of that beginning day, even though Oscar and his assistants had managed to squeeze more than a thousand small gilded chairs into it. The men fringed themselves around the ballroom doors and out into the corridors. To get into the ground floor of the hotel at all that

memorable night was something of an accomplishment.

Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt had donated the orchestra for the concert; and had done the thing handsomely, engaging nothing less than the New York Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Walter Damrosch. Although, as the *Herald* pointed out, in its characteristic vein, "the audience was ultra fashionable rather than ultra musical," the program was received with the same enthusiastic spirit that had been roused by a preliminary tour of inspection of the hotel, on the part of most, if not all, of the guests of the evening. . . . As this is a history, and inasmuch as we are speaking of the opening night of the Waldorf, it is of value to append the detailed program of the evening. It was, as follows:

Symphonic Poem, Festklaenge .....Liszt
New York Symphony Orchestra
Mr. Walter Damrosch, Conductor

Solo for Violoncello .....Bruch
Mr. Joseph Hollman.

Andante, from Quartette .....Tschaikowsky
New York Symphony Orchestra

From *Carmen* .....Bizet
a—March of the Toreadors
b—Dragoons of the Alcala
c—Danse Bohême
New York Symphony Orchestra

Ballade and Polonaise, *Vieuxtemps* ....
Mr. Johann Wolff

Duet for Violin and Violoncello
Miralabiana Luna .....Rossini
Mr. Wolff and Mr. Hollman

Prelude, *Die Meistersinger* .....Wagner
New York Symphony Orchestra

The concert was finished shortly before eleven o'clock. Soon after that the guests repaired to the main café, the Palm Garden, and the several private dining-rooms (one of which, the Astor Room, had been fashioned as an exact reproduction of the William Waldorf Astor dining-room of the mansion now supplanted by the new hotel). Fourteen favored persons had supper in the Astor Room on this great occasion. For the supper here the stately dining service of the Astor family was used.

The supper throughout the entire house was in charge of Emil, the former chef of the Geb-

hard *ménage,* whom Boldt had selected to be in charge of the Waldorf cuisine from the outset, with Louis von Arnim as the chief steward. A great deal of thought had been given to the planning of the menu. It follows:

Chaud

Bouillon en tasse
Huitres Bechamel
Bouches à la Reine
Cotellettes de ris de veau
Terrapin Philadelphia

Froid

Salade de Volaille
Galatine Dedinde
Pate de Gibier

Rillettes

Glace à l'orange
Glace Fantasie
Pièces Montes
Gateaux Assortis

Champagne Claret Punch Lemonade

It was conceded generally that Boldt had opened his new house in a very grand fashion.

No New York hotel before had ever opened with so much éclat; none since has ever done it in quite so fine a manner. . . . The *Sun,* in describing the affair which, even to the blasé society of Manhattan, had much breath-taking magnificence and brilliance, said, with its usual painstaking accuracy:

". . . To American enterprise is due most of the movement abroad in the world today toward luxurious hotels. But heretofore even American enterprise had not dreamed of such splendors as those through which the fashionable throngs moved last night. In few palaces of the Old World can such costly and artistic surroundings be found. Those who came found private suites, dining-rooms, salons and bedrooms such as kings could not excel. All the refinements of all the various civilizations had been drawn upon and the artists who had the work in charge had so blended that nowhere was there incongruity.

"There were more wonders than could be seen in a single evening—magnificent tapestries, paintings, frescoings, wood-carvings, marble and onyx mosaics, quaint and rich pieces of furniture, rare and costly tableware. There were brilliant

lights, palms and ferns, roses and violets heaped loosely on the tables or banked upon the mantels.

"Louis XIV. could not have got the like of the first suite of apartments set apart for the most distinguished guests of the hotel. There is a canopied bed upon a dais, such as a king's bed should be. Upon this couch shall repose the greatnesses and, looking about them, see many thousands of dollars worth of fineries. Think of the joy of being great!

"One sees throughout the hotel a mingling of foreign and American customs. There are baths, elevators and electric lights, recognizable as American improvements. There is a bar-room, but no bar. (It will be remembered that this was prior to the building of the Astoria, with its historic four-sided bar.) All who drink must sit at a table. There is a reception room, but no public parlors. Porters and bellboys will be supported by fees, after the European custom. The owner has made the hotel the natural abode of transient and houseless fashion and wealth. He has made its café the rival of Delmonico and Sherry."

*

On the day following the opening (March 15), the hotel was opened for regular business. Applications for rooms had been coming in, however, for a long time before. A number of apartments had in fact been assigned a week in advance of the actual opening of the house. As has been stated, Jonas B. Kissam, son-in-law of Abner Bartlett, was the first man to sign the register. With Mrs. Kissam and their daughter, Miss Grace Kissam, they were assigned to a showy suite of rooms. Mr. and Mrs. Henry Rosener, of New York, and Mr. and Mrs. Robert Garrett, of Baltimore, also were early registrants. . . . On March 25th, headquarters were established in the new hotel by the Entertainment Committee of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York, which in connection with the State Department at Washington, was making arrangements for the entertainment of distinguished Europeans who, it was expected, would stop in New York on their way to and from the Chicago Fair. It was recognized that at last the metropolis of America had a hotel in which official hospitality could be shown foreign visitors in a manner not to be excelled, if indeed

even equalled, by any other city in the whole broad world.

The Waldorf's much-heralded state apartments were occupied for the first time on April 15, 1893—just thirty days after the formal opening of the house. A party of distinguished Spaniards on their way to the World's Fair were housed in them. In this group—the forerunner of a long line of prominent official visitors to the United States to be entertained under the hospitable roof of the new hotel—were the Duke and the Duchess of Veragua, the Honorable Christopher Columbus y Aguilera, the Honorable Charles Aguilera, the Honorable Maria del Pilar Columbus y Aguilera, the Marquis Barbolis and his son, the Honorable Pedro Columbus de la Corda. Later came the delightful Princess Eulalie and her suite. . . . On the nineteenth of April, this first ducal party from old Castile held a reception at the Waldorf, which was attended by a hundred of the most prominent women of New York, Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia and Chicago. This affair also was given in the gold and white ballroom. American and Spanish colors were entwined in every

corner of the great room. There was little thought that within five short years these two nations would be at war.

A unique touch in the decorations—yet one quite typical of the resourceful Boldt and his faithful Oscar—was a miniature replica of the small caravel, *Santa Maria,* in which Columbus had made his eventful voyage of discovery, set high above the refreshment buffet. Under this brave little ship-model was gaily spread the ancient Castilian coat-of-arms; upon the side of it hung the royal banner of Spain; upon the other that of Queen Isabella and of King Ferdinand. It all went toward making a most unusual decorative effect.

CHAPTER V

THE WALDORF BEGINS TO FIND ITSELF

Yet all the elegance in the world could not, of itself, make the Waldorf into a successful hotel. Nor all the pomp and circumstance. No one knew this better than George C. Boldt. . . . Eighteen hundred and ninety-three was a year destined to be marked in the financial annals of America—as one of panic, of black gloom and of deep despair. And the Waldorf was not to be exempted from its withering touch. Few businesses in the entire United States were so exempted.

As the spring of that ill-fated year turned toward summer, Boldt came to be distinctly worried about the success of his venture. At all times a most temperamental man, he fell into a depressed habit of going to his friends and asking them if he had not made a mistake in embarking

in so huge an enterprise. Would he not have done far better if he had remained content with the comfortable earnings of the little Bellevue? Assuredly it had been a mistake, opening the house at the very threshold of oncoming summer. Then, too, the Chicago Fair was not going as well as had been anticipated. The great flow of European visitors that it was to bring into the United States—and who could reasonably be counted upon for sojourns in New York, both coming and going—failed to make appearance. And the shadow of hard times—that selfsame disastrous panic of 1893—already was upon the land. No wonder that Boldt worried. And worried long and worried late. On one memorable Sunday of that depressing summer of 1893 there were forty guests in the house; and on that same day, 970 servants upon the payroll! He had excellent cause for worry.

Yet, because of that extended season of depression, Boldt never dismissed a servant nor in any other way lowered his standards of service. He was a stickler for details. Himself an untiring worker, he expected or permitted nothing less of his associates. Seemingly he was on the

job twenty-four hours a day; actually he was generally on duty from nine o'clock in the morning until about three o'clock the next morning. Some time in the early evening he would retire to his apartments for a quiet game or two of solitaire or to read—for he was an inveterate reader. But he was always down upon the office floor before the theater crowd came in. In those days the Waldorf was a great place for after-theater suppers. The theatrical district had not then moved north of Times Square.

Partridge still was a procurable luxury in our very best hotels; The Waldorf not infrequently served from two to three hundred of these rare birds in a single day. And it was not a rare thing for seven or eight hundred lobster Newburghs to be dished out in the course of a single evening—after the theater. For three hours before eleven the assistant chefs were busy dropping the crustaceans into the copper pots of boiling water and shelling them.

Meanwhile Steward Von Arnim and the head chef, Xavier Kuesmeier, planned their menus for the following day. Kuesmeier was engaged for his job at a salary of ten thousand dollars a

year—considered absolutely tremendous in those days, although nothing at all as some hotel salaries go in the United States today. His salary, once published frequently, was compared with those of some of the smaller but still highly important government officers.

Boldt laughed at these comparisons, and called attention to the real importance of Xavier's job. The chef had been with the house for two months, succeeding Emil Redener, whose eyes, Boldt said, had been affected by the brilliancy of the electric lights in the Waldorf's kitchens.

*

To be "upon the floor" at almost every possible moment was almost a sacred creed with Boldt.

"The office is the pulse of the hotel; it is its pendulum," he kept telling his men. . . . It irked him tremendously to see a man seated at a desk. Not infrequently he would find one of his assistant-managers (or office-clerks, as they still were styled in those days) working busily in one of the private offices. Then he would say:

"Get out in front of the counter. I want you on the floor."

And if the assistant would remonstrate that he

had important letters to get off in the next mail, Boldt would be almost sure to insist:

"Very well, then. Take a stenographer out with you. But get out on the floor and as quickly as you can."

In this way was born our modern hotel custom of having assistant-managers upon the floor and in front of the registration desk—men with no small degree of authority for the adjustment of a thousand and one matters that are likely to come to them in the course of a day's work. These men maintain personal contacts with the hotel's patrons. They are, in truth, the survivors today of the landlord of the old-fashioned American hotel. As contact points alone it is hardly possible to overestimate their real value to a hotel. They retain for a large, modern and rather institutional type of tavern much of the feeling of intimacy and personal interest in the guest's welfare that made that old-fashioned host-landlord generally so huge a success.

None of these old-timers could possibly have exerted themselves for their guests' welfare with more interest and enthusiasm than George C. Boldt showed—at every hour of the day. And

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THE COMMANDING-GENERAL OF THE WALDORF OF TODAY, LUCIUS M. BOOMER

no tavern keeper at old Kalamazoo or Jonesville or Seven Corners could more anxiously await the coming of the morning train up the branch than Boldt awaited the incoming trains from Boston and Washington and Chicago each day.

"The Washington train is three hours late," he would say, occasionally. "There is a freight-wreck down the line. None of you boys go off duty until she comes in."

*

One of The Waldorf "front of the office" specialties that Boldt inaugurated was real helpfulness to patrons in the little financial difficulties that occasionally come even to the wisest and most provident of men. Cash a check for a stranger? Certainly. Extend him credit, perhaps? Certainly. . . . Somewhere in the depths of his great heart you think that George C. Boldt must have had something of the instincts of a gambler? To be willing to take such obvious chances? Yet the proprietor of the Waldorf was nothing of a gambler. He had no use at all for that sort of thing. He merely understood men—human nature, if you please. And understanding

both men and their nature he knew that if he took a chance on a man he would win—in more than 999 chances out of a thousand,—with the probabilities that The Waldorf would have gained a firm friend for life.

"Men are not going to the bad—nor the penitentiary—for a twenty-five dollar check, nor even a fifty-dollar one," he told his cashiers. "So unless you have good reason for suspecting a man, or his check, cash it—up to a reasonable amount."

Now this part of the new Waldorf's policy was radically different from that of all the American houses of that day, who generally regarded a stranger asking to have a personal check cashed as they would a thief who had been detected in the act of jimmying the safe. But Boldt insisted upon the point. Until today it is almost a universal policy in our hotels of the better class. It was Boldt, moreover, who inaugurated the policy of giving out nothing but fresh, clean, new bills at the cashier's windows—an attractive habit which also has been generally adopted by the better type of American hotels.

In a similar fashion he made a point of extending credit to his patrons—also an innovation

among the hotel-keepers of the beginning days of his career. He was lenient in his terms—once he had been satisfied as to the character of the patron; and here again he had an almost uncanny sense in sizing up the *genus* male. As well as the more dominant of the sexes. For it became an unwritten law in the Waldorf that any well-dressed lady who entered its restaurants and found herself without funds could square her account with the hotel by merely signing her name and her address upon the back of her bill.

This new financial policy of The Waldorf, once it quietly became noised about town, was much used. And seldom abused. Not only was it a great convenience to its patrons from out of town to have their personal checks freely cashed —to meet these necessities alone it frequently has become necessary to carry $60,000 or $70,000 in cash in the hotel's vaults over the week end—but it also proved a great boon to the house's city patrons. It opened credit accounts for all of these, just as a retail shop might do. And this method it has continued, with great success, until this day.

The accounts then, as now, were rendered

monthly. But when Boldt knew his patron and his financial standing particularly well, there was little or no pressure brought for payment. One of the house's most famous patrons has been a prominent New Yorker, who for many years has paid his account annually. On the June day before he begins his annual pilgrimage to Europe he walks into the office of the hotel and writes out a check for twenty thousand dollars or more, in payment of his account for the preceding twelvemonth.

New Yorkers of this type were a large concern of the proprietor of The Waldorf. In himself, the very essence of democracy, showing his friendliness and his help to struggling and oppressed folk of every sort, he none the less was a keen enough business man to realize the full value of a "good account" to his house. . . . A patron, like the late John W. Gates, paying twenty thousand dollars a year in rental alone for his great apartment in the Waldorf, was a business factor hardly to be ignored.

Once he turned quickly to one of his assistant-managers.

"See that man with the whiskers going toward

the elevators? Run after him and get a good look. That's Senator Clark, from Montana."

"But he never patronizes us," remonstrated the helper.

"Never mind. He may sometime. Now get along and get a good look at him. I do not want you to forget what he looks like. He may want big credit here sometime. See that he gets it—always."

*

With the established patrons of the house, Boldt gradually would become a great crony. The innate lovableness of the man endeared him to every one with whom he came in contact. He was quick tempered—once in a burst of indignation he loudly discharged his beloved assistant, the late Tom Hilliard, and fifteen minutes later was introducing him to a big banker from downtown as his probable successor when he, Boldt, should want to drop out of the hotel business. Quick tempered, but never unjust. Quick tempered, but always forgiving. In short, the kind of man whose little unimportant defects of character are apt only to endear him the more to his friends.

"On the floor" he was never too busy to stop every one of them for a bit of intimate talk. He was here, there, everywhere—save at the café of his own hotel. He rarely was to be found there—and when he was—never drinking.

"The sight of the proprietor of a hotel standing around drinking with guests," he once said, "might be suggestive of leisure on his part rather than of real interest in their welfare."

At any rate, on the job himself, throughout almost unending hours, he never drank, smoked, talked loudly or chewed gum. (This last was one of his pet aversions. He was known once to discharge a rather valuable employee, solely because the man would not cease gum-chewing in public.) Neither did he permit any of his fellow-workers in the big house to indulge in these proclivities.

In matters such as these, Boldt was nothing if not pronounced. In a magazine article a few years ago, while Boldt was still alive, Fred C. Kelly, the writer, made a very keen analysis of the great hotel proprietor. He made mention of a young man who had applied for work in the house and who, by some chance, had been tested

personally by its big chief. . . . There were still other qualifications than those which I have already mentioned that Boldt desired in his employes. And so he proceeded to find out if this particular young man measured up to those qualifications. He sent him on a little errand to another part of the hotel.

Before the young man had walked twenty feet his doom was sealed, so far as that job was concerned. He would not do. Boldt saw at a glance that he had not the sort of talents that lend themselves readily to the hotel business. He could tell this by the way the young man walked and by the way that he held his head. Yet to an inexperienced onlooker, the applicant looked like a young man of unusually good personality. He was modest in demeanor, thoroughly genteel in appearance, and walked without either too much swagger or too much humility. There was really a good deal of character in the way that he carried himself.

When the young man returned from his simple errand Boldt asked him a number of casual questions—just as if they were of no possible consequence, but merely to make conversation. He

asked him if he had chanced to pass a large woman in a velvet dress and wearing a blue hat. And if he had noticed whether there was a folded newspaper lying on the floor. . . . The applicant had been intent upon his errand and had not observed these things. . . . It was Boldt's theory, confirmed to his own satisfaction many times, that a good executive must be naturally observant. His eyes must be shifting to different directions as he walks along, so that he knows, almost unconsciously, just what he had passed. Boldt used to say that a man with executive talent should be able to talk to a guest, looking him right in the face and paying polite attention to what he says, but nevertheless with eyes alert enough to take in all that is going around him, all at the same time.

Augustus Nulle, once secretary to Mr. Boldt, and today one of the high executives of the Waldorf-Astoria organization, tells one incident of the remarkable way in which his former chief had developed his talents of observation:

It was during one of the great street parades which from time to time pass through Fifth Avenue. Without a word to any one Boldt slipped

across the Avenue and took a post upon the opposite side of it where he could command a view of all of the front windows of his hotel. Before the parade was entirely passed the proprietor of The Waldorf had noticed that three of his employes had violated his express instructions and had shown themselves in the windows. He promptly discharged them. When asked about the reason for such summary discipline, he merely said:

"There would have been very few lives lost in the Windsor Hotel fire if the employes had been at their posts."

At the very moment of that fearful holocaust, away back in 1899, the annual St. Patrick's Day parade was passing up the Avenue. The workers in the doomed hotel, attracted by the music of the bands, had crowded to the windows; among them the elevatormen who, when they finally had turned back to their posts, found that they were quite too late to be of real avail . . . .

*

To quote from a bit of Mr. Kelly's narrative (it will be remembered that at the time it was written Mr. Boldt was still alive):

". . . .Boldt demands more or less executive talent of every employe. He makes it plain to all on his payroll that their job is looking after the entire hotel. A man is hired primarily for one department, but he must keep his eyes open for anything wrong in any other department and report it at the right place. For example, if one of Boldt's waiters were to learn in a roundabout way that a certain guest was displeased with his room, and kept this information to himself as none of his affair, he would be betraying a trust imposed in him by Boldt.

"Boldt believes that a good hotel waiter has an excellent opportunity to learn by observation and to rise in the world. Boldt, himself, was once a waiter, and now, besides having vast wealth, he probably has no superior as a hotel man. Many other hotel men were once waiters. They learned human nature, learned the value of never-failing courtesy and, above all, that great hotels are built on the theory that the guest is always right.

"This recalls that Boldt believes that salesmen, in the ordinary sense, are less likely to be successful in the hotel business than equally competent men from almost any other line of work. The

reason seems to be that the old-fashioned salesman's success lies in his ability to bring customers to his own point of view. And that is the very thing that will not do in a first-class hotel. If a man does not like his room it would not be good management to try to convince him that it is the very room he ought to have, but to agree immediately, with the utmost cheerfulness, that he should have a different room—and hasten to get it for him. Of course Boldt and his men are high-grade salesmen in the newer sense of the word—that any man who succeeds in getting people to do what he wants them to do is a good salesman.

". . . .Boldt believes that by far the greatest single factor in successful hotel management is courtesy. . . . 'The beauty of courtesy,' says Boldt, 'is its cheapness—you make it, yourself.' . . . ."

*

In no department of the hotel, not even the office, did George C. Boldt show a keener interest than in the cuisine. Here his stickling for detail became almost a passion. He was particularly keen that the waiter—the contact point between the hotel kitchen and the hotel patron—

should be as nearly one hundred percent perfect as was humanly possible. I have just quoted to show how rigorous he was in the details of an employe's appearance and demeanor. And yet I have not even shown you the half. It was his endeavor from the outset that every man engaged for the service of his dining-room should be able to speak French, German and English. The idea of a really international hotel always had a tremendous appeal for him. He is reported at that early day as saying:

"I intend to have my force so selected that a man from Berlin or Paris can come to The Waldorf fresh from the steamer and have his orders perfectly understood."

Similarly the proprietor of The Waldorf ruled that there should be no bewhiskered males upon the staff of his hotel. Even moustaches were taboo. Boldt wished his entire staff close-shaven even though he, himself, chose to wear a tightly-cropped beard until the end of his days. But in the dining-room service in particular he maintained that the close-shaven waiter carried to the *n*th degree the appearance of absolute cleanliness and sanitation. Moreover, the close-shaven

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WHEN THE WALDORF STOOD ALONE. THE FIFTH AVENUE OF THE EARLY NINETIES

waiter would carry out that atmosphere of the high-grade European hotel that he was most anxious to impart to The Waldorf. And, because it was, at the best, difficult to differentiate between the various classes of employes underneath his roof, he made the order extend to all of them; and beyond the roof, to the cabbies who stood in line at the Thirty-third Street curb.

At this order there was much ado—and no little opposition. The cabbies were the first to take up the cudgels against it. After all—they argued—in a republic a man's whiskers were just as much a part of his inalienable rights to life, liberty and happiness as was that of the voting privilege. Discussion led to indignation. And indignation to a mass-meeting. The newspapers took up the question—and long letters and articles, for whiskers and against, filled whole columns of their space.

In the long run the thing came to Governor Roswell P. Flower, up at Albany. The fine old Governor, from out of Northern New York, was a deal of a partisan in the matter. For many years he had followed the old-time Wall Street habit and had affected "side chops." Moreover

there was an election close at hand and more than thirty thousand waiters and hackmen in New York City would be casting their votes. So the Governor issued a manifesto, branding the effort to enforce the clean shave as "undemocratic and un-American." One of the New York papers cabled this document to William Waldorf Astor, in England, who promptly sent back a solemn reply that the entire matter must be settled by the management of the hotel.

The management was adamant. Boldt stuck by his guns—and stoutly. He said that this matter of eliminating whiskers was a part of his program for perfecting the cuisine of The Waldorf —and so it was. He worked very closely with Oscar, his *maître d'hotel,* in all these matters. And Oscar interpreted the orders of his chief. Sometimes in lectures. Here are a few of his favorite topics for these highly informal discourses:

Never serve check with toothpicks.

When a guest is going down in his pocket for money to pay his check all the waiters in his immediate vicinity are not to stop work and stand

looking to see how much he gives his own waiter.

On saying "Thank you," and not merely nodding the head.

On not taking water from a bottle on a table where a guest is seated.

On not pulling the stopper in serving Worcestershire sauce.

On not presenting check to guest until asked.

On serving soup with a plate under soup plate.

On not pouring out water across the table.

All of this was part and parcel of Boldt's great plan for raising the service of his hotel to the very highest point conceivable. It was not an easy job at the best—a particularly difficult one in a land where every man is as good as his neighbor (if not a little better) and where no boy or girl who completes public-school training ever goes into service. A great handicap, this last. Yet handicaps were seemingly as but nothing to George C. Boldt. And the supreme thing, apparently, upon which he had set his heart and soul, was the perfection of his service—nowhere more so than within his restaurants.

*

And yet, away back there at the very outset, Boldt's aspirations for the perfection of cuisine in his new hotel—the very thing that long before had brought an undying fame to his Bellevue—were hampered, terribly hampered, by the physical imperfections of the kitchens of the original Waldorf. To organize a kitchen and a dining-room force for a five-hundred-room hotel that aimed at the outset to be a world leader in each detail of its service, was no small task. While added to this was the fact—unfortunate but true—that The Waldorf kitchen was badly designed for the great loads that were to be thrust upon it.

The hotels that have come since the building of The Waldorf have profited greatly by the mistakes that were made in its construction. It would be idle to deny this fact. It is a perfectly logical one. The Waldorf pioneered, truly. There were few precedents by which its architects and furnishers might be guided. It was a part—and a very difficult part—of their task to establish precedents, to help in that bygone day to win for the house the title of "The mother of the modern hotel." But how perplexing it all

was—away back there in 1893. No skilled or experienced efficiency engineer figured so many square feet of space for the kitchen, so many for the laundry, so many for refrigeration—all the rest of it. Instead, Boldt and Oscar and Tom Hilliard, the general manager of the house (promoted after a number of years of valuable service at the Bellevue), were puzzling their shrewd heads nearly off, trying to plan efficient working quarters—and then finding, in that fearful summer of 1893, that much of their work had to be entirely done over once again.

*

After depression, better times. After the ominous shadows of failure, success. Complete success. Overwhelming success, if you please. Opinions differ as to when the actual turning point was reached. Some, who have been connected with the house since the early stages of its career, put it at as long as two years. But the fact remains that nineteen months after he had first opened the doors of The Waldorf, Boldt had completely paid off the heavy notes that he had given for the furniture and the carpets of the hotel. These notes were for a term of three years.

The fact that the proprietor of the house had demanded this comfortable period for his payment showed that he had anticipated a slow season at the beginning. But he had not anticipated the expensive alterations to come immediately to the operating departments of his tavern. The reconstruction of its kitchen was an imperative necessity that could not be avoided, nor could he have anticipated the widespread business slump across the land that was to end in a disastrous financial panic. It is not given to many men to anticipate such things. The fact that Boldt not only weathered them, but that he became debt free in seventeen months before the tentative time that he, himself, had set for such an attainment, speaks volumes for the real ability of the man.

*

In the winter of 1893 The Waldorf began to come into its own. Not only had New York caught on to the real loveliness—back of all the sheer opulence and magnificence—of its new toy, but the rest of the country had followed likewise. Boldt was never an advertiser—not, at least, in any accepted or conventional sense. The Waldorf of those days—and for many, many

afterwards—was unique in the fact that it never purchased space in the advertising pages of newspapers or magazines.

Neither was Boldt schooled in the fine art of publicity, as it is practiced today. Yet he was far from being a mere beginner in either of these things. Remember always, if you will, that he had a real knowledge of psychology and of men, and of the workings of their minds. And he firmly believed that in the long run, the very best advertisement for his wonderful new hotel would be the unvarying high quality of its service. Upon the things that went to make this quality, he never ceased to hammer. Perfection—the perfection of hotel-keeping—was his religion.

*

This was perhaps the most interesting stage of the career of George C. Boldt. Certainly it was, to him, the happiest. When, a few years later, the great Astoria was to be added to The Waldorf, and a really huge hotel (of more than one thousand rooms) created, the house, while retaining all of its high ideals, became more like a machine, a perfectly-oiled and perfectly-running machine to be sure, but a mechanism none the

less. The old, unhyphenated Waldorf was a very personal institution. Large as it was, it was not too large for the proprietor to keep in close personal touch with every detail of it. He was everywhere about it—here and there and the other place—keeping at the servants in his nervous, energetic way—and greeting his guests with that delightful formality that completely won the hearts of all that ever met him. It was said that he could bow and kiss a lady's hand in a more mannerly fashion than any other gentleman upon this side of the Atlantic. A great hotel-keeper, he also would have shone as an international diplomat.

*

Yet large as was The Waldorf, even at the outset, it was not nearly large enough. Each month the demands upon its hospitality grew more pressing. New York was now coming uptown with a rush. Fifth Avenue as a residence thoroughfare—between Twelfth Street and Fiftieth, at least—was gone. In place of the old brownstone and red-brick fronts were coming shops—shops of high degree and of wonderful loveliness in their offerings—but shops none the less. Yet

FIFTH AVENUE VIEW FROM THIRTY-FOURTH STREET LOOKING SOUTH (1885) WITH THE FUNERAL PROCESSION OF GENERAL U. S. GRANT PASSING THE TWO ASTOR HOMES AND THEIR GARDEN WALL (RIGHT)

they but added to the prestige of The Waldorf, and to the terrific demands for rooms, particularly in the more crowded seasons of the year. To be a room-clerk in the old Thirty-third Street office during Horse Show week or the beginning of the opera season was no sinecure. One had to have the wit and the diplomacy of a Talleyrand or a Disraeli—or both of them together. Mr. Bagby was organizing his Monday Morning Musicales; dining clubs, such as the Southern Society and that of the Ohio, and the Sphinx Club, were springing into existence, with the superior cuisines of The Waldorf always as the largest excuse for their being.

Temporary relief was gained in 1895 when five or six small red-brick residences in Thirty-third Street, just to the west of The Waldorf were torn down and a five-story extension to the main building (so planned in its foundations and construction framework as to be capable of bearing many more floors, if ever it should become necessary) was built upon their sites. To make room for this wing, Mr. Boldt sacrificed the original "No. 13" in which he had dwelt prior to the completion of the hotel, and which since then

had been occupied by the cigar and wine importation company, which he organized under its name. In its place came a new "No. 13," however—a complete private residence so builded into the hotel structure that its separate identity could never be suspected, even from the small street door which served as its own individual entrance. This home Mr. Boldt occupied for a number of years—up to the completion of an even larger one, in Thirty-seventh Street, just adjoining Tiffany's.

But the chief feature of the wing addition was the great ground-floor ballroom which opened into the so-called Oak Room, the original men's café of the hotel. Here in the Oak Room it was that Boldt's whimsical mind exercised its ingenuity on winter nights in keeping crackling logs ablaze within broad fireplaces and in the serving of wondrous baked potatoes, hot and butter-filled. The Waldorf's butter bill came to a pretty penny because of this but Boldt did not mind. He charged the overcost to advertising. That was a sort of advertising that he really enjoyed. . . . In that day the house's free lunch had already become famous. Its ham was espe-

cially delicious. It came from the Jefferson County farm up in Northern New York which the proprietor had acquired as an adjunct of his elaborate new summer home at the Thousand Islands. . . . This place, on Hart Island, almost directly across from the little village of Alexandria Bay, was his one real diversion. In those rare intervals when he was able to slip away from The Waldorf for two or three days of rest and recreation he invariably repaired to it. . . . He had elaborate plans for this summer home of his. He proposed building a great house upon the island, after the fashion of some ancient *schloss* of Germany. There in the latter years of his life he would go, not for two or three days of rest at a time, but for two or three months. This was the dream of his old age. It was a dream which he was never to realize. At the time of his death the new house upon Hart Island remained unfinished, a monument in stone to the vision of a man, forever possessed of great vision.

*

It was in this new ballroom of the wing extension of The Waldorf that the Bradley-Martins gave their famous party, and because it was such

a very great party as to cause the room, itself, to be known for years afterwards as the Bradley-Martin room, it is worthy of a chapter of its own in this history.

CHAPTER VI

THE BRADLEY-MARTINS GIVE A PARTY—AND A GREAT CHINAMAN COMES TO VISIT AMERICA

To this day the great ball which Mr. and Mrs. Bradley-Martin gave in the South Ballroom of The Waldorf-Astoria remains the one outstanding social function in all the brilliant annals of New York society. It was given on the evening of February 10, 1897. It marked the formal and the final unqualified social acceptance of Mr. Boldt's Waldorf.

The bare preliminary plans for the Bradley-Martin ball, in public interest, completely overshadowed both the Lexow investigation and the steadily-growing Cuban trouble. The newspapers printed not merely columns, but whole pages about it in advance. It was discussed, in fine detail, both real and highly imaginative, in

every private house, apartment house and boarding house, all the way from the Battery to the Bronx. . . . Mrs. Bradley-Martin succeeded in keeping a fine air of mystery and imagination about the affair, which, of itself, nearly drove the society reporters into despair. It was known that some eight or nine hundred selected folk had been bidden to pass the carefully-guarded portals; and the list of invited personages for this event for a very long time remained the accepted list of those who were really in the inner circles of New York society. But beyond rough guesses at the list itself, little of the ball was known in advance. For a week before it fifty florists, and nearly as many electricians, worked upon the decorations. Behind locked doors. Mrs. Bradley-Martin would not lift the veils of secrecy which she had chosen to place about the preparations for her party. She even went so far as to display her displeasure toward Mr. Boldt, himself, when she espied him in the ballroom on the afternoon before the dance, inspecting the details of the decorations. She had hoped to keep her preparations a secret even from him.

It was known, too, that it was to be a costume-

ball. Which, while it pleased social New York greatly, also annoyed it, not a little. For a costume-ball meant that Mr. Ward McAllister's "Four Hundred" of that day could not on that night fulfill its traditional custom and go to the opera before proceeding to the ball. Moreover, as if to make the situation even more vexing, the Metropolitan announced *Martha* for that evening. In that day no opera was more popular than *Martha*. . . . Society was distinctly annoyed. A penny newspaper suggested in its editorial columns that it would be a pleasurable novelty for the Metropolitan if the invited guests to the great ball were to invade the Horseshoe in their costumes, but that impertinent suggestion was, of course, quite out of the question. It was the ball or the opera. And not much hesitation as to which. *Martha* played that memorable evening to an empty grand tier and parterre and a scraggly-looking orchestra.

*

As the hour for the ball drew near, outside interest in its details became more intense. Literally, New York was at fever heat over the affair. It took first place, not merely in the news

but in the editorial columns of the best newspapers. It was used by the more sensational ones as an opportunity for disserting upon the employment of wealth for pleasure. Mrs. Bradley-Martin retorted that one of her prime objects in giving the ball was to provide work for dressmakers, caterers and florists who, because of the extremely dull season, were out of employment. When the criticism persisted she threatened to move to England, a step that presently she took. . . . The result of all this public discussion was that the police were forced finally to give a very special attention to the affair—for the protection of the invited guests. It was even hinted that a bomb had been placed upon the steps of the Bradley-Martin house in Twentieth Street. This was not true; but it was true that when at ten o'clock in the evening the Bradley-Martins drove from their home direct to the ball it was under special police protection; which also was extended, even though in a slightly less degree, to their guests. All of these entered through the new residence of the Boldts and before they proceeded to the ballroom they were carefully scrutinized; first by Johnson, the famous *major domo*

of New York Society in the nineties, and then by the equally-famous, bewhiskered Captain Chapman, of the Thirtieth Street Police Station.

*

If it was out of the question for the invited guests to the party to go to *Martha* before it began, it was very much of a possibility for them to attend dinners in private homes preceding the great event. Mrs. Astor was the first to think of a costume dinner before the ball. Her example was quickly followed by Mrs. William C. Schermerhorn, Mrs. Ogden Mills, Mrs. Philip Rhinelander, Mrs. Henry Sloane, Mrs. Frederic Bronson, Mrs. James A. Garland, Mrs. Herman Oelrichs, Mrs. H. Mortimer Brooks, Mrs. William Pollock, Mrs. Henry Parish, Jr., and Mrs. H. Livingston Ludlow. Each of these parties entertained from sixteen to forty guests.

Mrs. Bradley-Martin wore an exquisite Elizabethan costume in black and flame color (she impersonated Mary Stuart), and, if we are to take the word of the society reporters of that day, jewels valued at more than $60,000. Her husband was attired in a costume copied from those of the courtiers of Louis XV. They received

their gayly-costumed guests upon a dais at the end of the huge room. . . . New York society fell quickly into the spirit of the affair. . . . Miss Anne Morgan went as an Indian girl and Mr. Welling as a chief. But his head-dress set so far above his naturally great height that he could not get within a closed carriage and so had to ride to the ball in an open victoria, to the vast joy of the crowds that lined the streets. Kate Brice appeared as a Spanish Infanta and then discovered after arriving at the ball that because of her crinolines she would be compelled to stand through long hours.

Three bands furnished music for this huge event. The former Waldorf ballroom had been made into a reception room for the evening and here a Hungarian band—a highly-popular fad in the New York of the late nineties—was stationed. In the great new ballroom, the Twenty-second Regiment Band, formerly directed by the versatile Patrick S. Gilmore, and the Hungarian Band from the Eden Musee were stationed upon opposite sides of the dancing floor. Which meant almost continuous music.

*

The ball began with *quadrilles;* first the *quadrille d'honneur,* which included at its head Mrs. Bradley-Martin and John Jacob Astor. Upon the other side Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish, Mrs. Lispenard Stewart, Miss Gerry, Mr. J. Townsend Martin, Mr. Whitney Warren and Mr. Robert Van Cortlandt. Others in this formal opening dance were Mrs. Orme Wilson, Mr. Harry Lehr, Mrs. Lee Tailer, Mr. Craig Wadsworth, Miss Lena Morton, Mr. Center Hitchcock, Miss Madeline and Mr. J. J. Van Alen. . . .The dancers entered the ballroom to the music of Beethoven. They had rehearsed in advance and so the *quadrille d'honneur* was given all the stateliness and the flare of a production upon the great stage of the opera.

Three more quadrilles—it was almost the final brave show of the square dance in American social life—and then the *cotillion,* led by Mr. Elisha Dyer, Jr., dancing with Mrs. Bradley-Martin. Two hours the *cotillion* lasted. . . . After which came supper. The infallible Oscar did his infallible best that evening. He had hand-picked and personally instructed two hundred and fifty waiters for that supper. You may be

sure that none wore whiskers—and that there were no novices among the corps that served a meal that began at one o'clock in the morning and continued until long after five o'clock—until Fifth Avenue was alive with New Yorkers proceeding toward their day's work.

Supper—and the great ball still young. New York simply would not hurry home from it. In the newer smart circles of the town formal dancing was already over; the square dances laid upon the lavender-scented pages of the annals of social New York; the cotillion was about to go their way. . . . After supper, at the Bradley-Martin party, then, the round dances, steadily gaining in popularity in those days—the waltz and the polka, always tremendously old and tremendously new, and even those new-fangled things, up to this time by no means sure of their admission to the halls of really polite society, the one-step and the two-step. At that time the fox-trot had not been born and the tango would have been cast out beyond the pale.

*

Once again—and only once—the Bradley-Martins gave formal entertainment at the Wal-

dorf. It was a dinner; upon the very eve of their departure before taking up their new permanent residence in England. Eighty-six covers were laid for a meal which, in its elaborateness and ornateness, considerably exceeded anything that New York had known up to that time (it was considerably before the famous dinner at Sherry's at which each guest was seated upon the back of a horse.) . . . The air of magnificent mysticism with which the Bradley-Martins always succeeded in investing their entertainments was not missing from this. Few details leaked out; save that to Senator Chauncey M. Depew was given the honor of taking in Mrs. Bradley-Martin. When the reporters asked Boldt for further information, he was Silence itself. He did not make a practice of discussing the private affairs of his patrons.

"It was one of the finest dinners ever given in New York," was all that he would say.

This farewell dinner came, however, after the opening of the Astoria side of the house—of which much more in good time. . . . It was just before that event, however, that the fourth birthday of the Waldorf—which fell upon the 14th

day of March, 1897—was celebrated by a party which still lives in the memories of its oldest employes.

This affair, Boldt called a *Spielgartenfest.* During the afternoon *Alice in Wonderland* was presented for the children, but the chief feature was in the evening when whist was played with living cards—some fifty-two of the young set participating in the game.

The scene was laid in Prussia during the reign of Queen Louise. Led by Mr. E. Vail Stebbins, as the joker, the array of cards was brought in before the guests who were assembled in the Marie Antoinette Room. The even-numbered cards and the aces were young ladies and the odd were young men, dressed in costumes appropriate to the suite. Each carried a staff with the suite and the number of the card that he or she represented at its top.

The joker shuffled the cards by means of a picturesque dance, the last dancer behind him—which happened to be diamonds—setting the trumps.

The game was played by Dr. Thomas F. Young, Jr., Mr. F. D. Winslow, Dr. F. H.

him. For at least five minutes all formality was suspended while Li played with the children. He said, not with the formality of the diplomat but with the sincerity of the man, that he would give a good deal to have such handsome, manly boys.

*

Between such glowing events as these the young Waldorf at last went its way serenely. It had found itself. And all America seemingly had begun to find it. Folk from Pittsburgh and Providence, Chicago and Dallas and Boston and Atlanta and Buffalo and Detroit—a thousand other towns as well—strove constantly for admittance to its portals, in addition to the most distinguished foreigners who approached these shores.

In those days there was that epigrammatic phrase that often was credited to the lips of Boldt:

"I am going to provide luxury—for the masses," was the phrase.

Mr. Boldt always denied ever having said that thing. Yet, as a matter of fact, that was the very thing that he was doing.

We had begun the development of a monied

attention of the entire city was directed toward The Waldorf. For seven days great crowds surged around the hotel from early morning until long after midnight, in hopes of catching even a faint, quick sight of the august celestial who, in his own distant kingdom, was second to the Emperor himself.

*

"Mr. Li," as folks quickly began calling him, came as the guest of the United States government. In such a capacity the crack American liner, *St. Louis,* which brought him into the harbor of New York upon a summer's day, was met by a fleet of ten warships which fired a salute of nineteen guns. . . . The parade from the old American Line pier in the Hudson River at the foot of Fulton Street up to The Waldorf was little short of a triumphal march. It was estimated that more than half a million people were in the city streets. . . . Upon his arrival at the hotel, the Viceroy of China (who also might boast of his titles of Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Senior Guardian of the Emperor, Earl of Suh Chi and Commander of the Northern

THE BRADLEY-MARTIN BALL

From a drawing by Henry W. McVickar in *Harper's Weekly* (1897)

Army) was surrounded by mounted police who were obliged to force a passage through the dense crowd in order that he might enter.

Yet crowds such as this had lined his way all the long distance uptown from the old downtown piers. The group of carriages that brought him and the little official and semi-official groups of dignitaries and newspaper men would have had a hard time of it, if it had not been for the efficiency of the police. . . . That all might see, and see clearly, the Viceroy rode in the first carriage with General Ruger and Assistant Secretary Rockhill of the Department of State at Washington. He had been preceded to The Waldorf by the Chinese Consul-General at New York, T. D. Sze, who had made the final preparations for his reception at the hotel. These had been carried forward in large detail. Outwardly The Waldorf showed the presence of its distinguished guest by a brave display of Chinese flags; the most of these, triangles bearing ferocious-looking yellow dragons upon backgrounds of dark green and of black. Inwardly there were more decorations, in addition to a military guard between the street entrance of the hotel

and the private elevator that had been reserved for the use of "Mr. Li."

Following the Viceroy there came his imposing suite of secretaries and interpreters, and last, but by no means least, his three cooks—the chief of these, a tremendously-tall and cadaverous-looking Chinaman, of most uncertain age and impressively arrayed in flowing robes of sombre black. The Prime Minister of China proposed to take no chances with chefs, not even of the Waldorf sort.

Hardly had Li Hung Chang been well seated in his great chair in the state apartments of the hotel before he was formally waited upon by Consul General Sze and the other members of the Chinese reception committee—all of them dressed in robes of black and purple silk, with wide flowing sleeves. To these Chinamen the coming of their Viceroy—the Senior Guardian of their Emperor—was an event of unparalleled importance. No one could overestimate the dignity of the occasion. Nor its joy. In those August nights of 1896, New York's Chinatown blazed forth in a glory that it had never known before—or has ever known since.

Straight upon the heels of the gentlemen of the committee of reception, the bags and boxes of His Excellency. Of every sort and description; including packages that bore an unmistakable resemblance to the trappery of cooking. So was it. A Viceroy who could not trust the fate of his Imperial stomach to an Occidental chef, likely must retain his faith in the stoves of his native land—and in these alone. . . . The crowds in the street were fascinated by the Chinese stoves. They crowded in about the wagons that had brought them from the steamer, and it was with great difficulty that all the luggage was finally carried into the hotel. . . .

Yet not even then were all the difficulties solved. It was plain to see that, if it were even possible, more interest was being taken in the Viceroy's cooks than in the great man, himself. They were given a section of the basement kitchen entirely removed and shut off from the rest of the room, lest the temptation to tamper with their queues or play other tricks of a like sort be too much for the kitchen staff. . . . They brought not merely their own stoves, but all their other cooking implements, of every sort. Yet,

aside from tea, rice and condiments, they drew entirely on the Waldorf's ample larders for the complicated dishes that they prepared for His Highness. Apparently the distrust of the Occidental did not go so far as his raw foodstuffs. . . . Yet when it came to the actual carrying of the food to the state apartments and placing it in front of the Senior Guardian of the Son of Heaven, again no alien hand was to be trusted. The cooks carried their food to their master; with their own ears heard his grunting praises of its celestial qualities. . . . And if the memory of J. P. Doyle, at that time Mr. Boldt's steward and in personal charge of the Chinese corner of The Waldorf kitchen, is at all to be trusted, the celestial qualities so appealed to Li that at each meal he consumed enough food to meet the normal desires of at least two full-grown and fully-hungry Americans!

Although the master cook and his two skilled assistants were to their great chief obedience and humility personified, they brooked no trifling nor interference from any others. Upon the day following their first arrival in New York, an enterprising artist from one of the newspapers

wormed his lowly way into the august section of the kitchen for the moment devoted entirely to the uses of these Ministers to his Excellency's appetite. He was cautiously beginning to draw, in a cubby-hole behind a refrigerator, when one of them discovered him and called the attention of his fellows. Immediately disturbance began —a perfect volley of Chinese jabber was poured upon the head of the intruder. . . . The entire force of Chinese cooks quit work—then and there. And when finally an interpreter arrived upon the scene in an effort to bring peace, the celestials issued their ultimatum that they would not be sketched by a "foreign devil," even though they should have to resort to the extremity of an appeal to their high Lord. . . .

*

It is from the contemporary press that one sometimes gains the most vivid descriptions of the impressions that events of this magnitude make—at the very moment of the making. And so from the *New York Times* of that day, I cull the following paragraphs:

"Li Hung Chang has transformed The Waldorf into a Chinese inn that might well be called

'The Sign of the Dragon.' Floating from the hotel are the imperial dragon and sun flags of China, and members of Li's retinue are standing or sitting all over the halls, corridors, dining-rooms and parlors, giving a decidedly Oriental appearance to the hotel.

"In the kitchen Chinese cooks are preparing Chinese food in Chinese pots and pans. The dishes they have cooked have created more curiosity than the Viceroy, himself. Crowds of people have loitered about the hotel for two days, staying as late as midnight and getting there again before sunrise. The police cannot persuade them to leave, even after Li has eaten his birds-nests and sharks-fins and retired to dream of his native empire. . . ."

*

Early rising was very much in order for the delegation, for the great Li Hung Chang, like the great Georges Clemenceau and the much earlier but equally great Duke of Wellington, believed that as soon as one turned over in bed in the morning one should rise, no matter what the hour. On his first morning at The Waldorf, Li rose at six o'clock. Word of this was sent post-

haste to the kitchen and thirty minutes later his breakfast went jangling up to him—yet with all of the ceremonial of an evening banquet. . . . At the other end of the day Li Hung Chang showed a similar disregard for Occidental conventions. It was his habit to retire promptly at eight o'clock each evening. . . .

There were occasional slight exceptions, however, to this rule. For instance, when, on the evening of August 30th, a dinner was given for him at The Waldorf by members of the American diplomatic and consular service to China. It was not a Chinese banquet—The Waldorf has never aped Chinatown—except so far as Li, himself, was concerned. With the exception of the great Viceroy it was exclusively Occidental. On that evening his immediate staff tempted fate by consuming huge quantities of strange American viands; but Li simply would not risk the experiment. For him, his cooks prepared liberal servings of Chinese food. If his retinue chose to hazard their lives in the cause of hospitality, the consequences must be upon their heads.

Upon this occasion the Prime Minister was simply resplendent. He wore a light blue robe,

his trousers caught up around his ankles and covered by white linen stockings. His feet were encased in white-soled Chinese shoes. Over his robe he wore his historic yellow jacket, fastened in the front by curiously-devised black frogs. A black satin cap fitted closely to his head and was crowned with a cluster of corals which constituted the "button" of his rank. On the front of his cap, just above the middle of his forehead, was a brilliant circlet of diamonds with a huge and unusual enameled stone set in its center.

The banquet was served in the old ballroom of The Waldorf—it was before the completion of the so-called Bradley-Martin room—upon an oval table which was set for seventy guests. This table was decorated with American Beauty roses, hydrangeas and ferns, whilst the space enclosed by it was banked with goldenrod, palms and more ferns. Around each light was a shade of imperial yellow and the walls were draped with Chinese and American flags.

John E. Ward, at that time senior ex-minister to China, presided at the feast. Other members of the Chinese diplomatic service for many years past were special guests, as were also George F.

Seward, John Russell Young and Assistant Secretary of State Rockhill.

Li looked solemnly bored while his interpreter read his speech and rose immediately after that portion of the ceremony had been concluded—for already it was 8:10 o'clock—ten minutes after his fixed time for going to bed. Before retiring, however, he went to the smoking parlor where he was almost mobbed by a group of elegantly-dressed women, whose curiosity for once got the better of their manners. When the imperial interpreter lighted his master's pipe—an elaborate water-pipe, of the sort much affected by Orientals—rumor spread through the room that it was opium and the crowd became even more dense. . . . Li finished his smoking, however, in a calm obliviousness of the excitement that he was creating and then rose to go to bed. The crowd surged after him. If it had not been for the hotel attendants the curious sightseers would have forced their way into his private apartments.

*

When the Viceroy finally departed from New York—for Philadelphia—it was in a halo of

glory; particularly so from the viewpoint of the hotel's guests and its employes. For to each woman guest he had sent a great basket of roses. For Mr. Boldt he left a magnificent box of tea, in addition to his photograph, inscribed with his name, his titles, and a full list of his relatives and his ancestors back to the sun and the moon. To the housekeeper he gave a dress pattern of silk, to each of the elevator men, floor attendants, chambermaids and the head hallman, ten dollars, and to the hallboys ten dollars apiece.

But perhaps the pleasantest of all the traditions of the coming of the great Chinaman that remain today in the annals of The Waldorf concerns itself with Oscar—Oscar Tschirky with his two sons, then mere boys in their short trousers. Oscar visited the great Li by appointment in his apartment, bringing his two little sons with him dressed in their spick-and-span sailor suits.

Chinamen adore children. When the Tschirky boys were brought before the Viceroy his great mouth slowly broadened into a double-dental grin. Then he took the boys upon his knees and jabbered and chuckled in Chinese so fast that the interpreter could not begin to keep pace with

him. For at least five minutes all formality was suspended while Li played with the children. He said, not with the formality of the diplomat but with the sincerity of the man, that he would give a good deal to have such handsome, manly boys.

*

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In those days there was that epigrammatic phrase that often was credited to the lips of Boldt:

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We had begun the development of a monied

class in this country—a class in considerable numbers. To these Boldt catered, subtly and adroitly, but keenly all the while. . . . In the summer of 1898 he hired a handsome steam-yacht, the *Calypso,* and placed it at the disposal of the guests of The Waldorf, to take them out upon the waters of the Sound, the harbor or the Hudson. For this de luxe service he charged ten dollars a seat, and included luncheon aboard the craft. The *Calypso,* which carried but twenty-five passengers, could be chartered for $150 for the entire day.

To get his guests to the yacht and back again Boldt set up a four-in-hand service—it was, of course, long before the day of the motor-car—and this feature of the day's outing proving so popular in itself, it presently was extended, with the aid of Mr. T. Suffern Tailer, to Woodmansten, and later to Arrowhead.

When the motor-car finally did arrive, even though in its very primitive first stages, it was the ingenious mind of George C. Boldt that found an immediate use for it; not only in connection with The Waldorf, but also with the new Bellevue-Stratford Hotel that he had just com-

pleted in Philadelphia to replace his two former separate hotels of those names. Between The Bellevue-Stratford and The Waldorf-Astoria therefore, a through daily service of fine automobiles was inaugurated—a full seventeen or eighteen years ahead of the great tidal wave of motor-bus service in the United States. In those long-ago days the privately-owned automobile was still a great novelty. At that time there were enough prosperous folk who came to Mr. Boldt's hotels who did not own motor-cars of their own to make such a service a paying institution, and a very great addition to the generous hospitality of the hotels.

It also is worth recording that two of the very earliest wireless stations in the United States were established upon the roofs of the Boldt hotels—The Waldorf-Astoria, in New York, and The Bellevue-Stratford, in Philadelphia. There was nothing too new in all the world for George C. Boldt.

CHAPTER VII

THE COMING OF THE ASTORIA

From almost the very hour that he first opened his New York hotel Boldt had worried incessantly about what might appear upon some immediately-adjoining corner. The entire neighborhood for many blocks around was in the course of a rapid transition. The old buildings around about the Waldorf were coming down, right and left. In his inner soul Boldt felt that any day any one of them might be torn away and replaced by a huge hotel that would appear as an immediate rival to his. . . . His particular worries he reserved for the Thirty-fourth Street corner, still occupied by the John Jacob Astor residence. Slowly there had grown in his imaginative mind the hope that some day that site might be occupied by a near twin to The Waldorf, which might be operated in conjunction

with it. But common-sense did its best to dash that hope. The separation between the two branches of the Astor family seemed to make such a possibility entirely out of the question. . . . Yet disquieting rumors continued to come to Boldt about the future of that plot immediately adjoining his hotel. Once he heard that an apartment-house would go up on it; again, that it would hold a department-store; finally, that a hotel would presently appear upon that corner. This last disturbed the proprietor of The Waldorf most of all. He made immediate efforts to bring about the erection of a hotel under his control.

The John Jacob Astor branch of the family was also represented by an estate agent, Mr. George F. Peabody. The eventually successful negotiating was finally accomplished by Mr. Abner Bartlett, working in consultation with Mr. Peabody. . . . Boldt kept a close finger upon all the preliminary details of the agreement. He was very much *persona grata* to John Jacob Astor, having himself served the formal breakfast at the brilliant wedding of the New York millionaire to Miss Alva Willing of Philadelphia, in

the historic Yellow House in South Broad Street, but a few years before. Unlike Waldorf Astor, who rarely went there, John Jacob was a frequent guest of the original Bellevue. He could—and often did—acclaim the virtues of the terrapin, the oysters-Bellevue and the other dishes, for which that little red-brick hotel had gradually acquired a national fame.

So, with John Jacob Astor favorably impressed with Boldt's abilities as a *hostelier* both in Philadelphia and in New York, it presently was definitely decided to tear down his big, old-fashioned, comfortable house at Thirty-fourth Street and Fifth Avenue—some others, too, in the cross-town street—and there build an enormous new hotel; to be called The Astoria and to be operated jointly with The Waldorf. Mr. H. J. Hardenbergh, who had designed the original house, was asked to prepare the plans for the new one. . . . And it was then discovered that the foresight of George C. Boldt had caused the main floor of The Waldorf to be set high enough above the Thirty-third Street level to come just even with the pavement of Thirty-fourth Street (there is a considerable difference between the

levels of these two parallel cross-town streets). At first sight an unimportant detail, this really was a most important one, inasmuch as it meant that the great ground-floor of the combined hotels would be at an absolute single level. . . . You could hardly ever anticipate the proprietor of The Waldorf on long-distance vision.

The John Jacob Astor estate, while finally agreeing to the joint-hotel plan, held tightly to its rights. The Astoria was not only to be built separate from The Waldorf in every way, shape and manner, but Boldt was required to put up a stiff bond that—should the necessity ever come to pass—would provide for the immediate closing by brick and stone of every opening in the stout division-wall that was to separate the two hotels. The bond was promptly put up; the contract drawn and signed. . . . And in the spring of 1895 the demolition of John Jacob Astor's house was begun. And but a few months later the construction of a sixteen-story hotel followed.

*

By the summer of 1896 The Astoria was well upon its way toward completion. The details

of its coming magnificence were beginning to seep out into New York. More than the original Waldorf ever had been, this house was to be recognized as a semi-public institution. Its very coming seemed to mark a distinctive change in the urban civilization of America. Sharp observers of our social customs began to perceive a definite tendency on the part of well-to-do folk to make their real homes in the country, coming to New York for but three or four, or possibly five or six months in the winter.

To cater to these folk was to be the special desire of The Waldorf-Astoria. Gradually it was to become slightly less a hotel for the mere feeding and housing of travelers, and considerably more a semi-public institution designed for furnishing the prosperous residents of the New York metropolitan district with all of the luxuries of urban life. With this in view great attention was given to the planning of the ballrooms and other apartments of public assemblage in The Astoria. The Astor Gallery alone—in the style of Louis XV. and an almost exact replica of the historic Soubise ballroom in Paris—would, of itself, have been a great acquisition for any

hotel. Yet even it was overshadowed by the main ballroom, immediately adjoining, which remains to this day, and after all these years, the most sumptuous apartment of its sort in New York, if not indeed in all America. To paint its lesser murals Turner and Low and Simmons were summoned by Colonel Astor; for its giant ceiling the genius of E. H. Blashfield was employed. The results of the labors of these men speak for themselves.

The entire great second floor of the new hotel was designed to be used exclusively for entertainments both public and private—the third floor being given over both to additional state apartments and to private dining-rooms of every sort and description. The great ballroom was designed to be the outstanding feature of this floor. In its day it was unique among all hotel ballrooms; not alone because of its softly-radiant Blashfield ceiling or the gorgeous ovals by Will H. Low along its sides, but rather from the fact that it could be transformed almost instantly from a huge *place-de-danse* into a most comfortable and practicable theater, with more than eleven hundred neat little gilt chairs—of the dis-

tinctive Waldorf-Astoria type—placed upon its floor, in addition to the permanent double-tier of boxes around three sides of the room. The fourth side, when the ballroom went into formal entertainment, held an ingenious portable stage, with all the usual theatrical appurtenances of drop-curtain, scenery, electrical fixtures and the like.

Upon this ingenious stage—quite as large as that of the average dramatic theater in New York—have come at one time or another almost all of the great actors, the great singers, the great musicians and the great lecturers that have visited the chief metropolitan city of the Americas during the past quarter of a century. For the musical celebrities, Mr. Albert M. Bagby has been largely responsible. He has developed a remarkable knack for handling affairs of this sort.

Mr. Bagby's Musical Mornings antedate even the coming of the original Waldorf. A distinguished musician himself, a pianist, pupil of Franz Liszt, he began writing for the critical press upon musical topics. He also showed an aptitude in speaking upon the same questions.

With the result that in the summer of 1890 Mrs. Julia Ward Howe invited him to address the historic Town and Country Club, of Newport. At the end of this address his reputation as a speaker upon things musical was made.

Under the pressure of some of the folk who had heard him at Newport, in December, 1891, he set up in his studio, in the Rembrandt Studios, in West Fifty-seventh Street, a series of Monday morning talks upon music—its history and its present-day status. Starting with from seventy-five to eighty ladies, he gradually reached and passed the capacity of even his generously-sized studio. . . . Boldt heard of this. He had just completed The Waldorf. The attractive original ballroom upon the Thirty-third Street side of the ground floor was placed at Bagby's disposal. The Musical Mornings were moved into The Waldorf. They never have been moved from it. As larger ballroom has succeeded larger ballroom the Mornings have moved, and still there are never any empty seats. . . .

*

Not to know Mr. Bagby's Musical Mornings is not to know your social New York. They are

almost the apotheosis of its dignified intellectual life. They are never advertised; either in the newspapers or in the corridors of the hotel. No one is bidden to them. Yet each year Mr. Bagby is compelled to refuse hundreds of ladies who would become subscribers to these exclusive affairs. The capacity of the Grand Ballroom of The Waldorf-Astoria, set as a concert-hall, is sixteen hundred seats. Beyond this he cannot and will not go.

These concerts are builded upon prestige; and the ability of their impresario to give real entertainment. The lectures ceased long ago. The musicians who first came to illustrate Mr. Bagby's talks, are now the sole features of the Mornings. Madame Melba was the first of these to come—in that long ago day when the stodgy *régime* of German opera in the then-new Metropolitan was ended and the brilliant administration of Abbey, Schoeffel and Grau begun. In quick succession followed Calvé, Nordica, Eames, Edouard de Reszke, Pol Plançon. . . . The list to this day is that of the most distinguished singers of the opera. Caruso sang upon seventeen different occasions at the Musical

Mornings. And yet, in this entire history, no singer has ever been announced in advance; no promise or guarantee given of the artists who would appear. . . . New York society takes Mr. Bagby on faith. And never has it had its faith shaken.

*

What real New Yorker at some time or other in his life has not been "among those present" at a really festive night in the main ballroom of The Waldorf-Astoria; or at some more dignified affair, perhaps? The grave and the gay. Tonight, the inimitable Emma Calvé, in a rare evening of song and brilliant recital; tomorrow evening, the Ethnological Society of North America in a solemn pondering of the problems of the Alaskan Indians; the third night, an uproarious annual dinner of some college fraternity; the fourth, a reading by Lord Dunsany—so it goes. The professional and the amateur. A distinguished group of artists from the Metropolitan one evening, and the next a band of mummers over from Yale or from Princeton. The fascinating primadonna in the high-heeled slippers and the extremely *decolléte* gown and the wondrous blonde

wig is the coach of the junior crew at X——. Together they all rival the best of the professionals.

Upon this ingenious stage was born that most distinguished amateur dramatic organization of the New York of yester year—The Strollers. In the room itself have dined—and dined repeatedly—such organizations as the New York Chamber of Commerce, the Pilgrim Association, the Pennsylvania Society, the Ohio Society, the Southern Society, the Sphinx Club, the Psi Upsilon Fraternity, the Amen Corner—the list of really distinguished organizations that have feasted under the wonderful ceiling could easily be spun to fill whole pages of this book. Even today, when the blight of a prohibition law is upon the land and public dining has suffered measurably in consequence, the great ballroom in the height of the season is engaged for each night throughout the winter season—and for long months in advance. Concerts, dinners and balls still follow one another; in swift succession. Some of these, like Mr. Bagby's Monday Mornings and the Charity Ball—to cite two instances out of many—are fairly to be classed as features of the place since

its inception. Others, like the great Victory Ball, which dates back only to that unforgettable night of the 11th of November, 1918, are to be classed among the newcomers. But here the new vies with the old—in brilliancy and in beauty.

*

In the planning of this second floor of The Astoria, it was arranged that the Astor Gallery should be so placed that it could be brought into conjunction with the main ballroom whenever the necessity should arise. The necessity often arises. The Astor Gallery, with its lovely dancing floor, its own tier of gallery boxes, its dozen panels by Edward Simmons—representing perhaps the very highest attainment in mural art in the entire hotel—not only is in frequent use by itself, but also both as an overflow dining-room to exceedingly large banquets in the main ballroom and as a reception-room before, and a dancing place after, a large public dinner, to which the ladies have been bidden.

It closely adjoins both the main corridor of the second floor and the ante-chamber to the main ballroom, and with so many French doors lead-

ing into each of them that there is plentiful access for even great throngs of folk. In addition, the Astor Gallery possesses its own generous foyers and ante-chambers. So that there may be—and there very frequently are—two entirely distinct and separate entertainments being held; the one in the Gallery, and the other in the main ball-room, in addition to other more or less private entertainments of a sizable sort in the superb apartments upon the Waldorf side of the house.

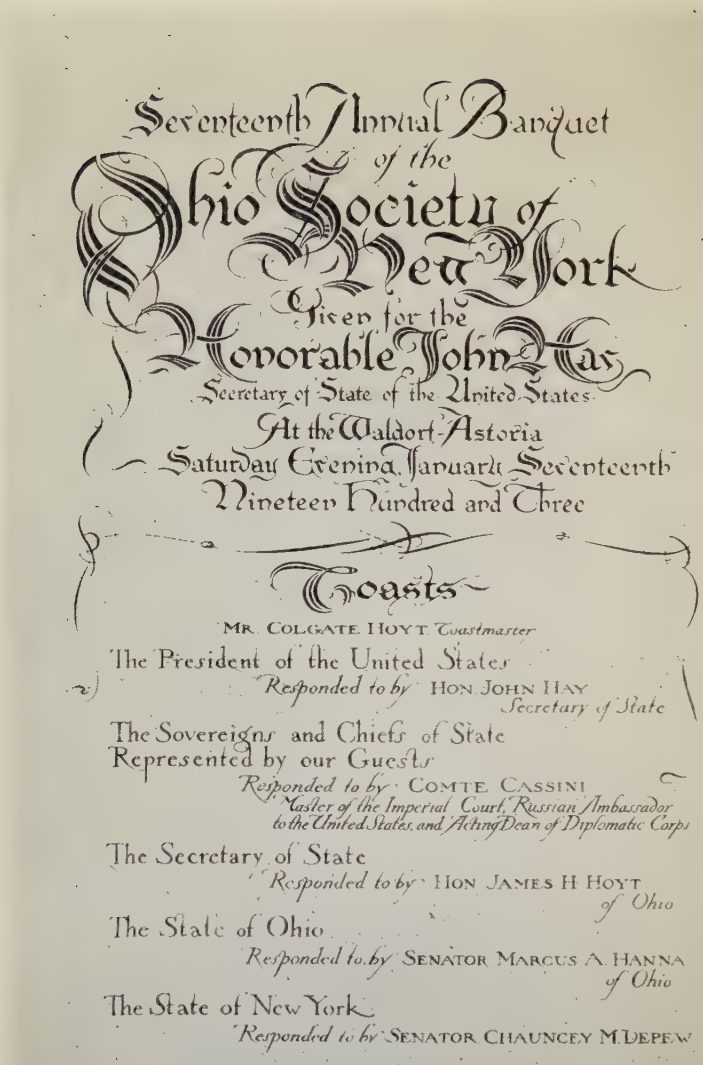
*

Splendid as were the second and third floors of the new Astoria, it was upon the ground floor that the ingenuity of Boldt lavished itself the most generously. By minor mistakes made in the planning of The Waldorf he had profited. They were not repeated. On the contrary, the main floor of The Astoria was designed to be the most efficient, as well as the most attractive main floor of any hotel in the world. Its vast size (approximately 35,000 square feet) was a great aid in bringing this about. At no corner was the architect cramped in the working out of his ideas.

The outstanding feature of this ground floor

Dinner to
Governor Theodore Roosevelt
by the Commercial Interests of New York City
on Saturday evening March the tenth
Nineteen hundred
at The Waldorf Astoria

MENU CARD OF A DINNER TO GOVERNOR THEODORE ROOSEVELT


Seventeenth Annual Banquet
of the
Ohio Society of
New York
Given for the
Honorable John Hay
Secretary of State of the United States
At the Waldorf-Astoria
Saturday Evening, January Seventeenth
Nineteen Hundred and Three
Toasts
MR. COLGATE HOYT, Toastmaster
The President of the United States
Responded to by HON. JOHN HAY
Secretary of State
The Sovereigns and Chiefs of State
Represented by our Guests
Responded to by COMTE CASSINI
Master of the Imperial Court, Russian Ambassador
to the United States, and Acting Dean of Diplomatic Corps
The Secretary of State
Responded to by HON. JAMES H. HOYT
of Ohio
The State of Ohio
Responded to by SENATOR MARCUS A. HANNA
of Ohio
The State of New York
Responded to by SENATOR CHAUNCEY M. DEPEW

MENU CARD OF A DINNER TO A FAMOUS AMERICAN,
THE HONORABLE JOHN HAY

was a huge corridor—in after years to be known, somewhat irreverently, as "Peacock Alley"—which was to run practically the entire length of the building, parallel to Thirty-fourth Street. With the knowledge definitely in mind that the Astoria was to be operated indefinitely in conjunction with The Waldorf, it was planned to bring the registration, cashier's and other offices from the older house into the new and to place them alongside this superb interior street, more than 300 feet in length. . . . At its head was to be a huge Fifth Avenue restaurant—the Rose Room—very similar in location, in dimensions and in general architectural treatment to the Empire Room of the original Waldorf and communicating directly with it. . . . Alongside the long corridor there came, in turn, on the one side or the other, a capacity lounge or lobby, a carriage-way, a two-storied open court—corresponding in size and in location to the adjoining Palm Room of The Waldorf and opening directly into it—the office, and two Men's Cafés: the one upon the street side of the corridor—the exquisitely-designed North Café with its side walls and great ceiling all in exquisitely-carved

woods—arranged primarily as a men's restaurant, and the one upon the inside chiefly for a men's lounge and bar, with the possibility of serving meals there when necessity should demand. . . . In this last room Mr. Boldt finally conceded a bar. The Waldorf had never possessed such an institution. But The Astoria was a bigger matter, by far. And run upon a somewhat different plan. Therefore its bar—a huge four-sided affair, behind whose counter eight men could easily work at a single time—became a fixture of the institution. . . . Boldt always owned and conducted his own importing company—for wines and cigars. It became a real feature of his enterprises.

One of Boldt's pet achievements in the new Astoria was the carriage-way. When The Waldorf had first been designed he had wanted an enclosed carriage-way incorporated into its plans. But because of the comparatively small size of its plot he was forced, although reluctantly, to abandon the idea. He did not forget it. It would not only afford a certain degree of privacy to patrons driving up to their hotel, but he felt that it would give the house, itself, a certain

atmosphere, a certain European flavor, that could be gained in no other way.

What was impossible in the design of The Waldorf became a part of The Astoria. What mattered it if nearly seven thousand square feet of valuable ground space had to be given to this square carriage turn entirely within the walls of the hotel? The Waldorf-Astoria would have, between the two houses, a ground-floor space vastly greater than any New York hotel had ever before possessed or that any other would possess—for many years to come. . . . The carriage-way became a feature of The Astoria. And so it remained, until a few years before Mr. Boldt's death—even though carriages had then become as scarce as boot-jacks—and the turns of the carriage-way were far too sharp to be negotiated by the average motor-car.

*

To feminine New York, at least, no portion of the new Astoria was to have greater appeal than the special provisions that had been made for woman's comfort. Four years before, when he had completed The Waldorf, Boldt had sent the old-fashioned "Ladies' Parlor" into the limbo

wherein it really deserved to go. In his houses womankind was to have the full fling and the full go of mankind, with the single exception of the bar. . . . At that the proprietor of The Waldorf-Astoria was conservative in his ideas; as modern ideas go, extremely conservative. He never quite approved of women smoking or drinking (even when permitted by law) in public. More than this, he hated public dancing. And for many years he would have none of it in his hotel; even though his fashionable new competitors uptown had long since welcomed the innovation. But when he did accept it, it was with the spirit and enthusiasm that forever remained with him.

He had some innovations of his own, however. For the ladies he provided the first facilities for shining their boots that ever had been offered them by a New York hotel; as well as a billiard-table in the present South Café, which they were invited to use, and at which Nicola Tesla had a great fancy for playing. In the gallery of that room he had ping-pong tables and the women of the day when The Waldorf-Astoria was very new used to go there for an hour at the tiny rackets.

. . . If they did not like these things there was the Palm Garden, already become the most popular and most elegant restaurant in all New York; or the Turkish Room, with its swarthy-skinned Oriental in his fez pouring out coffee, of an incomparable strength. . . .

*

In his new house Boldt carried these unique ideas of The Waldorf to still further lengths. No detail was too small, seemingly, for his careful thought. Take the question of the elevators. With great decision he planned one "bank" of these, near the new offices of The Astoria, which would be used chiefly by guests arriving and departing, with their luggage and the like. At the Fifth Avenue end of the great main corridor was another "bank" of elevators originally designed to be used by the regular guests of the house, who at night would probably be in evening dress and prefer to be a little segregated from those in street dress. As a matter of fact, this distinction has never been observed in The Waldorf-Astoria's two chief groups of elevators. But this was no fault of George C. Boldt. . . .

*

Another Boldt specialty in the new Astoria was the pneumatic tubes, in which mail and messages could be carried from the ground floor up to the floor-clerks upon each of the upper sleeping floors. In fact the floor-clerk, herself, was a Boldt specialty. As an invention she was indeed the creature of necessity. It was obvious that in a hotel of more than a thousand sleeping-rooms, such as the combined Waldorf-Astoria was to be, it would be almost physically impossible to handle at the central desk all of the smaller needs of the guests, as well as their more important ones.

So Boldt conceived the idea of creating upon each floor, in a central and convenient location, a branch-office of the hotel, in constant touch not only with the main office, the housekeeper, and the kitchen, but with each of the rooms upon that floor. And while the work of such office would be constant, for at least seventeen or eighteen hours out of the twenty-four, it would rarely be very rapid or otherwise physically onerous. Therefore, in the new Waldorf-Astoria women were to have another chance; not this time as patrons, but as officers of a minor but fairly im-

portant guide—and yet one quite remote from the housekeeper's department, which up to that time had been practically their sole opportunity for advancement in hotel life. . . . For gentlewomen in particular these posts offered real opportunity. And by gentlewomen they have been filled, exclusively, from the day of the opening of The Astoria up to this.

Remember, if you will, that that was a day before the universal use of the telephone. In 1897, the year of the opening of The Astoria, there were only a little over 15,000 telephones in all New York city, or not as many as the average American town of 100,000 people would boast today. It was not until 1902 that the individual room telephones were introduced into The Waldorf-Astoria, and in so doing the house was even then regarded as having introduced a radical innovation. . . . When the Astoria section was first opened the guest's sole connection with the house was through a push-button, which communicated with an annunciator in the floor-clerk's office upon his floor. To her he told his necessities. And if they were such as she could not fill herself, she passed his message on to the

main offices downstairs—and made sure, herself, that the guest's request was promptly complied with.

In a similar fashion, a pantry also was created upon each sleeping-floor with direct dumb-waiter service with the kitchens in the basement. In order to prevent too great an upheaval of this department, the actual preparation of the foods was retained in the Waldorf side of the house; the Astoria side was given over to the service, as well as to greatly-increased storage provisions. . . . Throughout the new house, the planning—floor-levels, and a thousand and one small, yet extremely important details of that sort—was such as to bring the new Astoria into a precise working consonance with The Waldorf. No matter if Boldt had signed a bond that would permit a complete severance of the two houses—at almost a moment's notice. It was well understood that such a rash proceeding would hardly ever come even within the range of possibilities.

*

In the spring of 1895, as we have already said, the work of tearing down the John Jacob Astor house was begun. The house, which had been

built in 1854, was nearly as much a landmark of that immediate portion of Fifth Avenue as the huge and ungainly white marble "Mansard" residence across the way which A. T. Stewart had builded in one of his repeated bursts of extravagance, and which was destined to be used by the Manhattan Club for a term of years before it, too, should go—and the Manhattan Club moved south to its present comfortable home in Madison Square. . . . It was a stoutly-built house, but the wreckers made quick work of it. In but a few weeks time it was entirely gone; a great gaping hole, there at the Thirty-fourth Street corner replacing it, and the wreckers were at the seven houses just beyond it in the cross-town street, tearing them brick by brick and timber by timber.

Beyond these houses Mr. Astor had previously acquired a tract just fifty feet wide and extending all the way from Thirty-third Street through to Thirty-fourth—a tract then estimated to be worth a half a million dollars. Upon this tract the great landowner of New York had planned to erect a store and office building, seven or eight stories in height. . . . He had already begun

excavations for this structure when the plan for the new Astoria came to the fore. Immediately he stopped work upon it.

"Go ahead with your new building," urged Boldt.

"Why?" asked Astor.

Boldt showed him why. They would cut a fine new street at the rear of the combined hotels—all the way from Thirty-third to Thirty-fourth—forever protecting them against any intrusion of light and air rights. Astor could put up his new building. It would be both an ornament and a protection to the new street; and the street would be an immense addition to the new building. . . . Astor saw the point instantly. He arranged for the street and went forward with his building.

In this way was Astor Court born. . . . And The Waldorf-Astoria was the first hotel in all Manhattan to occupy an entire city square unto itself.

*

In the building of his hotel, Waldorf Astor had hardly condescended to show even the smallest personal interest. When it was completed,

even, he went into it but once or twice. On the occasion of his very infrequent visits to America, he generally stopped at the Netherland and transacted his business with Boldt almost exclusively through his various agents.

But John Jacob Astor threw the most intense personal interest into the building of *his* hotel. In company with his wife he went over the ground of the new Astoria, practically every day that it was under construction. There was not one of these days that he was not in the architects' offices, inspecting, consulting, criticising, sometimes suggesting most valuable changes in the original plan.

Even the name of the new house had called for much thought upon his part. At the outset various names had been suggested for it. Rumor had had it at first that it would be called the New Astor—in distinction to the venerable old house of that same name in lower Broadway, which still was doing a brisk business. Later it seemed certain that it would be known as the Schermerhorn. The Astoria was finally settled upon to commemorate the little Oregon town, at the mouth of the Columbia River, where the first

fortunes of the founder of the family were made. . . . Astoria in those early days was but the crudest sort of a Pacific Coast trading-port. But there it was that the first John Jacob Astor of which New York took any cognizance laid the foundations of one of the very greatest of the fortunes of the America of today.

*

So Astoria became the name of the new hotel at Thirty-fourth Street and Fifth Avenue. But as The Waldorf-Astoria it was destined to gain its mighty eminence.

CHAPTER VIII

THE WALDORF-ASTORIA BEGINS ITS CAREER

The Waldorf-Astoria, as a complete hotel-unit, first opened its doors for business upon the evening of the first of November, 1897. Mr. Boldt saw to it that the occasion was made a sufficiently festal one. For the formal opening he provided a concert, a children's entertainment, a theatrical performance, a supper and a dance. Again there was a great concert—as the chief feature of a memorable evening—and again, as upon the evening of the opening of the original Waldorf, it rained—fiercely and furiously. But still again, the enthusiasm of New York society over its great toy refused to be quenched. Mrs. Richard Irvin repeated her remarkable success at the opening of the Waldorf side of the hotel. This time the proceeds of the opening night's entertainments were to be given to not less than

four institutions; the Loomis Sanitarium for Consumptives, the Babies' and Mothers' Hospital, the Saturday and Sunday Women's Auxiliary Hospital, and the Babies' Ward and the Day Nursery at the Post-Graduate Hospital.

The opening ceremony began in the afternoon with a fairy spectacle, *The Realm of the Rose,* given by one hundred children of well-known New York families. The portable stage had been set up in the main ballroom for the first time. At three o'clock its new curtain parted to show a bevy of exceedingly animated white, yellow and red rosebuds. There were larger rosebuds in the rear—around-about all of them swarms of bees, butterflies and humming-birds. . . . This was ballet. The ballet-girls, little children, in after years were to look tenderly upon The Waldorf as the first theater of their dramatic desires.

A brilliant audience gathered for this afternoon *fête.* From the faded newspaper clippings of that day that describe it in flamboyant terms, one finds that among the more distinguished members of this gathering were the Brazilian Consul-General and his friend, Mr. Antonio Guenares, Mrs. James Pinchot, Mrs. Frederick

Edey, Mrs. John Prince and Mrs. Livingston Hyde. At the close of this first feature of the formal opening there was dancing in the Myrtle Room and the serving of refreshments.

*

In the evening came the more formal portion of the affair. Also in the evening the storm increased, vastly. It was a fearful autumnal wind and rain, growing in violence and keeping away from the hotel opening many hundreds of folk. Yet it is difficult to know where these would have been accommodated. As it was, the huge new hotel was crowded—to the very limits of its capacity. Forty-eight uniformed policemen, from the West Thirtieth Street Station, in addition to a dozen or more "plain-clothes men" from Mulberry Street Headquarters, were necessary to keep the vast crowds moving within the hotel, to say nothing of attending the guests in and out from their carriages.

During the first part of the evening, Anton Seidl's orchestra played in the Astor Gallery. Mr. Seidl, himself, was unable to be present, so Mr. Emil Gattenhusen conducted. The program for the concert was as follows:

1. Overture, from *Merry Wives of Windsor* ..... Nicolai

2. a. Gavotte
   b. Slumber Song ..... Hoffman

3. Romance, *Sans Paroles* ..... Wieniawsky
   Violin, Miss Hoyle; Organ, Mr. Gould; and Orchestra

4. Ballet Music, *Queen of Sheba* ..... Goldmark

5. Largo ..... Handel

6. Coronation March, Folkunger ..... Kretschman

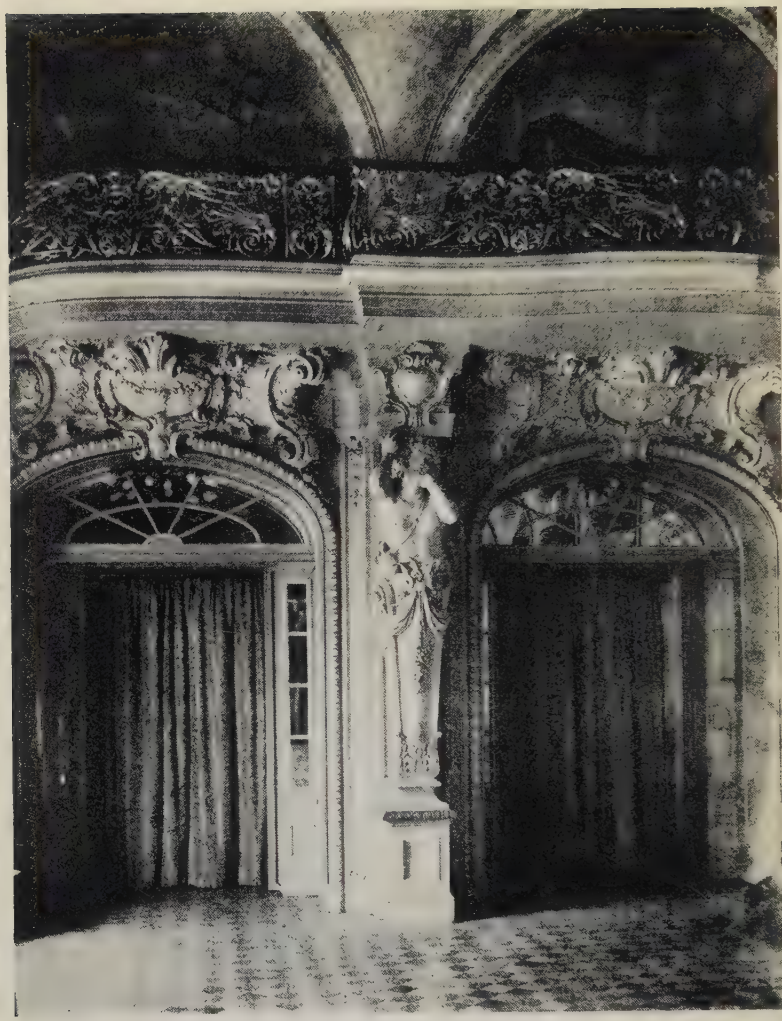
7. Hungarian Fantasie, No. 2 ..... Liszt

8. a. *Sous L'Ombrage* ..... Gillet
   b. Flirtation ..... Steck

9. Waltz, *Geschichten aus dem Wiener Wald* ..... Straus

Promptly at ten-thirty the entire assemblage moved to the ballroom where the second act of *Rosemary*—then a raging New York success—was given by Mr. John Drew, Miss Maude Adams and their excellent company. The generosity of Mr. Charles Frohman was chiefly responsible for this unique feature in the opening of a hotel. . . . Of this portion of the evening's

THE FAMOUS COACH "VIADUCT," AT THE PORTALS OF THE ORIGINAL ASTORIA



A DETAIL OF THE ASTOR GALLERY

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entertainment, the *New York Herald,* the next morning, said:

". . . . The assembly in the ballroom looked like a court theater in some European palace. All the boxes were filled and more than a thousand people were crowded into the floor-space. . . ."

Again, as in the opening of The Waldorf, a group of well-known young New Yorkers acted as ushers, to show the entire house to the guests. Among these were Dr. Leonard Ely, James Otis, Frank Adee, W. S. Edey, Gordon Fellows, E. Vail Stebbins, H. Pelham Robbins, Madison Grant, Frank Otis, Jr., William A. Duer, Edward J. Berwind, Franklin Plummer, Rawlins Cottenet, Britton Busch and Theodore Frelinghuysen.

Owing to the terrific weather—the old-time horse-drawn carriage did not always afford the same protection as the snug, modern limousine—extreme full dress was not universally observed. Yet there were many very brilliant costumes. Mrs. Garret A. Hobart, wife of the Vice-Presi-

dent of the United States (President and Mrs. McKinley had been invited to attend the opening, but because of Mrs. McKinley's health were unable to accept) wore mauve satin, trimmed with point-lace; Mrs. E. L. Baylies, black satin, with diamond ornaments; Mrs. Frederick Edey, grey satin; Mrs. W. Storrs Wells, black velvet and Venetian point-lace; and Mrs. George C. Boldt, point-satin, trimmed with black embroidered lace.

Among the distinguished guests who were present, in addition to Vice-President and Mrs. Hobart, were Mr. and Mrs. John Jacob Astor, Mr. and Mrs. Herman Oelrichs, James W. Gerard, Jr., Mrs. W. S. Strong, Mr. Bradlee Strong, Mr. and Mrs. E. L. Baylies, Mr. and Mrs. John Sayre Martin, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Roosevelt, Mr. and Mrs. H. C. Duval, Mr. Louis Sherry, Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Peabody, and the United States Senator from Rhode Island, Mr. George Peabody Wetmore.

Supper, which was served in the new sun parlor atop the Astoria (which boasted the first roof-garden of any hotel in New York, if not in all the land) consisted of the following:

Chaud

Bouillon de Volaille, en tasse
Huitres à la Béchamel
Bouchées de Ris-Veau à la Louloure
Cotelettes de Volaille, Duchessi

Froid

Saumon à la Russe
Galatine d'Orleans
Filet de Bœuf, croustade Macedoine
Pâté de Foie Gras, à la Gelée
Salade de Howarde
Mayonnaise de Volaille
Sandwiches et Billettes
Entremets de Douceur
Charlotte de Vanille Brisserets
Gelée aux Fruits
Gateaux Madeleine Petits Fours
Glaces de Fantassie

Lemonade Claret Punch Champagne

As a house-warming this opening of the combined Waldorf-Astoria was not only a most complete affair, but a real success. As an aid to charity—practically every feature of the program having been donated—it was a tremendous help.

*

For the next seventeen or eighteen years the record of The Waldorf-Astoria reads as a succession of successes. People came to it as never before they had come. One thousand rooms—765 of them with private baths! Such size! Such luxury! Such elegance! . . . Yet doubting Thomases, who were perfectly willing to admit George C. Boldt's triumph with The Waldorf—once it had all come to pass—shook their heads dolorously as they confronted, for him, his problem with The Waldorf-Astoria. A hotel of such size had never before been builded—such houses as the Pennsylvania or the Commodore, each today with more than two thousand sleeping rooms, seemingly were beyond the imagination of 1897.

Boldt met his problem—one is almost sure to add immediately "of course"—and solved it. Neither was he compelled to undergo a season of doubt, of worry and depression such as confronted him after he had originally opened The Waldorf. From the very outset the hyphenated house was a tremendous "go". . . . The four-sided standing bar became the most popular single place of resort in all the town and was in no little way responsible for The Waldorf-

Astoria becoming known in New York as "the club of all clubs." In its cafés at five in the afternoon could ever be found the really representative men of the town. At the close of business downtown, Wall Street adjourned to that room. And the late tickers all the way across the land buzzed with the gossip of what was being said and done at The Waldorf that evening. Business deals of vast magnitude constantly were being "put over" under its roof—plans laid, companies bought and sold, and new ones organized . . . . It is a matter of record that the greatest of all American single commercial institutions—the United States Steel Corporation—was born underneath the roof of The Waldorf-Astoria; first informally in a conversation between John W. Lambert, John W. Gates, Max Pam, and two or three others in the main corridor of the hotel; and then a little later in the Gates' apartments upstairs.

And—perhaps as a final concession to the undoubted semi-public character of New York's newest hotel—some irrepressible newspaper reporter dubbed that glorious main corridor along the Thirty-fourth Street side of the hyphenated

hotel, "Peacock Alley." If The Waldorf-Astoria was the "club of all clubs" in New York, Peacock Alley at once was—and still is—the "street of all streets" in the city. Through it marched—and still marches—the smartness of the town, masculine as well as feminine. To see—in Peacock Alley; and to be seen—in Peacock Alley—that was, and still is, the proper thing. No one knew this better—or loved it better, right up from the bottom of his big heart—than one George C. Boldt.

With the vastly-increased capacity of his hotel Boldt could not alone take care of many more guests, transients or residents, but he was in a position to develop more entertaining under its roof than had before been possible. . . . In its very first winter the Astoria took its place as a center of music and of art in New York which it has never relinquished. I have spoken of Mr. Bagby and his concerts. In that first winter a series of twelve concerts were given on alternate Thursdays by Anton Seidl in the main ballroom —memories of which still linger among the older folk of the town. They were modeled by Boldt and Seidl quite frankly after the court musicales

of Germany and of Austria. And neither Potsdam nor the Schöenbrun could ever have presented more brilliant audiences than those that confronted the master, Seidl, as he stood, with uplifted baton, before his men.

Even to this day the list of the box-holders for these concerts bespeaks the presence of their organizers—George J. Gould, Mrs. H. A. Dimock, Mrs. J. A. Bostwick, J. P. Morgan, John Jacob Astor, George L. Rives, Anson Phelps Stokes, Harry Payne Whitney, William Rockefeller, Mrs. Henry Draper, Perry Belmont, Jacob H. Schiff, Charles D. Lanier, Mrs. Van W. Brinckerhof, Mrs. C. A. Gardiner, Dwight Collier and W. D. Sloane. The prices for the boxes for the twelve concerts were fixed at $350 each—those for the single seats upon the ballroom floor at sixty dollars. . . . New York gasped for a moment at these prices; then went ahead and fought almost tooth and nail for the privilege of buying seats at them.

From the beginning The Waldorf-Astoria has never been particularly distinguished for low prices. But also from the beginning it has never charged high prices without giving a very large

measure of value received for them. This, at the outset, was Boldt's policy. Those who have followed him have made it their policy. Not how little but how much—how much might honestly be given for a fair price. It has been the policy upon which one of the most successful hotel businesses in America has been firmly builded.

*

With its new state apartments The Waldorf-Astoria was in better position that ever before to offer entertainment to the particularly distinguished guests who are forever coming into New York town. There probably is not a real leader in the social, the financial, or the political world anywhere in the United States who has not, at some time or other, stopped under its roof. Railroad presidents, bankers, United States Senators, the Governors of the States, each of the Presidents of the United States—since the very day of its formal opening—have been entertained within it. . . .While from Europe the list of arrivals has not been less dazzling. Not merely the sheer magnificence of the house, itself, but the distinctly international tone which Mr. Boldt succeeded in implanting within it from the be-

ginning, has made it a magnet which has reached far across the sea.

In earlier chapters I told of the visits of the Spanish dignitaries to The Waldorf in the days of the opening of the Chicago World's Fair, and of the far more dramatic coming of Li Hung Chang. The completion of the entire Waldorf-Astoria was marked by a noticeable increase in this form of official visiting. It was only a short time after the enlarged hotel had been opened before there came the Crown Prince of Siam, a pleasant, boyish fellow, with an enormous interest in the Western World.

But Mr. Boldt's hour of greatest triumph arrived in the visit of Prince Henry of Prussia to his hotel in February, 1902. His pride in that occasion was almost unbounded. The preparations for it were without a parallel up to that time. Boldt drilled the servants—and he redrilled them. He rehearsed them in every detail of the parts that they were to play in the reception of the hotel's most distinguished visitor. . . . And finally Prince Henry came—a shrewd diplomatic move on the part of the Kaiser; the visit was ostensibly for the purpose of launching

a royal sailing yacht over near Staten Island . . . . As the warship that was bearing him up the Narrows was being saluted by our own forts and ships, Boldt was putting his house employes through the last of the agonizing rehearsals—water faucets were being tried, electric bulbs tested, even the desk and bureau drawers were being slid in and out to make doubly sure at the last moment that they did not stick nor creak.

And yet, when all is said and done, something did happen. The royal prince of the Hohenzollern blood had hardly been escorted to his lovely apartment, seemingly with all of the pomp and ceremony in this whole wide world, before the royal telephone tinkled down into the chief's office: "Pardon. . . Could he request? . . . The hot water does not run in the Prince's bath." A corps of hallmen had to take hot water to His Highness in democratic wooden pails. For the only time in his life, one George C. Boldt must have contemplated suicide.

*

Still, if The Waldorf-Astoria or its gifted proprietor had never made mistakes, neither would ever have been the immensely human things that

they finally came to be. . . . Perhaps if Boldt, himself, had not been so entirely human, the royal prince of his natal land would not have pinned the Order of the Double Eagle upon his breast at parting and told him that he never before had stopped at quite such a fine hotel. But Boldt was human. And so is—and always was —The Waldorf-Astoria. Here is another instance of its human quality.

It came to light some years after the German Prince had both come and gone. Another of the great dignitaries that occasionally visit the United States was about to arrive at the hotel. Mr. Boldt and Augustus Nulle—whom we shall see again in the pages of this book—were following a custom for the reception of extra-distinguished guests that had been inaugurated long before. They went down to the curb of the carpeted entrance of The Waldorf in Thirty-third Street which had been reserved for the exclusive use of the blue-blooded royal prince. Suddenly Boldt espied an upholsterer—a veteran employe of the house—crouched upon the red carpet and busily engaged in mending a tiny rent in it.

"That man!" he exclaimed. "Gus, he must be removed at once."

Upon this Boldt was obdurate. He began storming—in his delightful temperamental fashion. And when Nulle asked what it was all about, his chief explained. It seemed that this very upholsterer had been working upon this very red carpet on the occasion of the arrival of Prince Henry. At that time no one had paid any particular attention to him. But he did not care. Opportunity came to him but few times in his life. Yet when it did come, it came not in vain. . . . The royal carriage halted at the Thirty-third Street curb. The Hohenzollern prince stepped briskly from it and walked up the red carpet. The upholsterer shot up and out of his corner, straightened to military attitude, went straight to the royal prince of his native land and grasped him warmly by the hand.

"Welcome to our city, Prince Henry," said he, in perfect German. Curtain!

*

The instant popularity—and prosperity—of The Waldorf-Astoria, while bringing great responsibilities to Boldt, also brought him most

substantial profits, some of which he invested in banking—a business which always held a great fascination for him, some in New York city real-estate. He was heavily interested in the Trust Company of the Republic at the very hour of the dramatic Dresser failure which brought it crashing to the ground. Then it was that the real quality of the proprietor of The Waldorf-Astoria showed itself. With Stuyvesant Fish, appointed a trustee to bring what was possible out of the wreckage of the ruined bank, he not only worked night and day, but put all his energy and resources toward paying its creditors as far as it was humanly possible to pay them—and then a little more. It was Boldt's handling of this trying matter that brought him the undying friendship of the late J. P. Morgan. Up to that critical hour the liking of the banker for the hotelman had been of a rather casual sort; after it there was a bond of friendship between the two men that never could be broken. . . . Morgan came often to The Waldorf-Astoria; not often officially, because he was a man that detested show or ostentation of any sort. But, when he was in New York, almost daily he would enter

the house, at the small door in Thirty-fourth Street, close to the florist's shop, and make his way almost unobserved up the half-flight of stairs that led to Boldt's private office upon the mezzanine floor.

In his investment in the Lincoln Trust Company, Boldt was much happier. There was little chance in that fine, conservative institution of his being compelled to repeat his embarrassing experience in the Trust Company of the Republic. And to the day of his death he remained one of its trustees.

*

But it was in his real estate investments that Boldt probably showed his very greatest sagacity. The Waldorf-Astoria had not long been open before its proprietor began buying small parcels in the immediate neighborhood, most of which have since greatly enhanced in their value to his estate. The first big move that he made in this direction was the purchase of a number of plats of land at the southeast corner of Fifth Avenue and Thirty-seventh Street. Before he made a definite move in this matter, he called one of his most trusted aides in the hotel to his side.

"Find out what that corner is worth," he instructed, showing just the size of the plat that he wished. In those days the Paran Stevens house stood upon that corner.

The assistant came to him upon the following day.

"One million dollars will buy those lots, Mr. Boldt," said he.

Boldt scratched a pencil for a moment over a sheet of white paper.

"I think that Tiffany's ought to move uptown," he remarked quietly. "I think that if I can acquire that property they will be willing to pay me two million dollars for the land. It would be difficult for them to go out directly and get it for less than that figure."

*

The deal went through. Up to the time that it was recorded it was the largest single real-estate transaction contracted by a single individual in the history of the city of New York. . . . Boldt reserved two of the city lots in Thirty-seventh Street, in the rear of the new jewelry store, for his own use. Upon these he planned and builded for himself a wide-fronted city resi-

dence of just the precise type that he wished. When it was finished he moved his family into it from their former residence within the walls of The Waldorf in Thirty-third Street. That was in 1907. . . . Within thirty days after they had moved into their lovely new home, Mrs. Boldt was dead.

Her passing was a terrible blow to her husband—the termination of a perfect partnership. From her death he really never recovered. He strove to get back into the old order of things, but never entirely successfully. And his own death—in December, 1916—came finally as no great astonishment to those of his cronies who had known and who had understood the tremendous attachment between this super-hotelman and his wife.

CHAPTER IX

A NEW CAPTAIN COMES UPON THE BRIDGE

The death of George C. Boldt was a supreme crisis in the history of The Waldorf-Astoria. In all this land no hotel had been more uniformly recognized as a one-man institution. So overwhelmingly great was Boldt's personality, so intense his individuality, so passionate his delving into the every detail of the operation of the great house, that the entire institution hung more upon him than even those who were closely connected with it for many years could possibly realize. In twenty-three years he had succeeded in thoroughly organizing his business. He developed a great aptitude for just that sort of thing. He knew men, understood them, and appreciated them. And knowing and understanding and appreciating men are the foundation-stones of

any successful organization. . . . "My railroad," said the executive head of one of our largest railroad systems in the United States, just the other day, "is ninety-five percent men and just five percent dust and rust."

So it was with The Waldorf-Astoria. At the time of Mr. Boldt's passing it was still either the largest or the second or third largest hostelry in all the land; yet a great building, magnificently stocked and furnished—until its entire value was fixed at well over twenty million dollars—was no more than the men who operated it. No one understood this better than George C. Boldt. He understood it so perfectly he was forever and a day trying not alone to pick the ideal type of hotel executive but to train him in every detail of an almost unending business. And this he continued, nearly up to the very hour of his death.

*

So it was that the passing of Mr. Boldt was a real crisis for The Waldorf-Astoria to weather. It needed all of its prestige, all of the many, many friendships that it had acquired through the passing of the years, to battle against the

rough sailing right ahead. . . . The skipper was gone. . . . For a little time a hard tussle lay ahead of her. That she finally came around—and so very well—was due to but two things: the loyalty of her patrons and of her staff.

These last came forward immediately after the death of the master of the craft and proffered the full resources of the aid that in them was. A younger Boldt, trained by his father to understand the intricacies of the business, was placed in command. But only temporarily. George C. Boldt, the younger, had but little taste for assuming his father's great rôle. He said so, frankly, and after three years—as we shall see presently—he chose to relieve himself from the situation. And a new captain came to the bridge of the ship.

In these three years—and rather trying years they were, too; with many readjustments to be made in the management of the house—its entire staff came loyally to the aid of the second generation of Boldt. There, for instance, was Oscar (no one ever thinks of calling him by his final name), in years of service easily the doyen of the group. In every detail of the *cuisine* Oscar was

quite capable of carrying on and carry on, he has, from that day to this. . . . It is almost inconceivable to think of The Waldorf-Astoria without Oscar Tschirky as it used to be to think of the house without George C. Boldt, its founder, constantly in evidence within it.

There were others, too. For instance there was Augustus Nulle, to whom reference already has been made in these pages. Today Nulle comes dangerously near being a Waldorf veteran. For it is all of twenty-one years since young Nulle, already with five years of experience in a real-estate office upon the Island of Manhattan, answered an advertisement of the Waldorf-Astoria Importation Company (the affiliated organization for the wholesale distribution of wines and cigars which Boldt had founded in West Thirty-third Street almost coincidently with the establishment of the original Waldorf; and which eventually found lodgment in the roomy basement of the newer Astoria). The Importation Company wanted "a young man to make himself useful about the office." Young "Gus" made himself so very useful that it was not long before those eternally vigilant eyes of his great chief

fixed themselves upon him, and he found himself going up. And up. And up. A capable hotel executive was in the making. . . . Large opportunity came to him. Boldt made young Nulle his private secretary. Which meant that from that time forward almost infinite opportunities would be given him for development in his chosen career.

For five years Gus Nulle stayed as private secretary to the chief. Then he went into the steward's department of the hotel. In 1912 he was made chief steward. In all he spent eleven years in that all-important department of the super-tavern. More opportunity. More experience. In 1917 his title—and his position—were enlarged to that of purchasing agent. Now he purchased, not merely foodstuffs, but almost every conceivable form of supplies for the house: coal, linen, furniture, carpets—all the rest of it. . . . Today Nulle is the Managing Director of The Waldorf-Astoria, and he is right-hand man to the President of the Boomer—du Pont Properties Corporation, which controls, in addition to The Waldorf-Astoria, the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel in Philadelphia, the

Willard in Washington and the Windsor in Montreal. From a private office upon an upper floor of the hotel he views with a directing hand the entire activities of a giant hotel, which possesses not one single phase unfamiliar to him.

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I have mentioned the instance of Mr. Nulle in some detail, not because, after all, he is exceptional, but rather because he is typical of the Boldt method of training. I could enlarge with many other instances: Thomas Hilliard (whom you have already seen coming over with Boldt from the Bellevue-Stratford at Philadelphia in 1893 at the beginning of things, and rising to be the manager of a great linen importing house in downtown Manhattan, up to the time of his death but a year or so ago); Walton Marshall, well-schooled in Waldorf thoroughness and precision and so easily chosen to be the head of the lovely Vanderbilt hotel in New York and its chain of affiliated houses; Alfred S. Amer, long since graduated from the Waldorf to become the guiding head of the historic St. Charles Hotel in New Orleans; Frank S. Hight who opened the famous New Willard Hotel in Washington and

who returned to Waldorf affiliations when the Willard became part of the Boomer-du Pont group; John Rogers, Joe Smith—the list could be prolonged to almost indefinite lengths.

When one contemplates it he is less likely to think of the tremendous hotel which George C. Boldt founded and which for so many years he carried forward upon his own capable shoulders as a one-man institution. . . . The fact that it did weather the great crisis of the passing of its founder showed that, after all, there was vast co-operation—the sort of thing that the modern business executive likes to call "team-work"—in the organization. Without that team-work The Waldorf-Astoria, her captain gone, surely would have foundered in the hard seas of business competition.

*

A new captain has come upon the bridge. . . .

Five years ago, when the younger generation of Boldt announced its final determination to withdraw from The Waldorf-Astoria, there was again a deal of doubt and perplexity as to the future of the house. Then it was that a shrewd strategic move was made by its several owners.

Down Thirty-third and Thirty-fourth Streets

—but a short block away, at Broadway and Sixth Avenue—there had arisen, but a decade before, one of those huge new hotels which from time to time are given to great New York and which, to a great degree, are the children of the mother Waldorf. This house, the McAlpin, was for a number of years under the management of Mr. L. M. Boomer. . . . Boomer possesses a large amount of the imaginative faculty that was always of such great aid to George C. Boldt. He attracted the attention of General (now Senator) Coleman du Pont, whose very great constructive genius has been repeatedly shown in recent years, not only in the upbuilding of the huge powder industry that bears his family's name, but in that monumental downtown enterprise, the Equitable Building. Because of the immediate success of the McAlpin under Boomer, Senator du Pont visualized the reincarnation of The Waldorf-Astoria under his direction. A man of action, he said instantly:

"Boomer, I will take it if you will run it."

Boomer agreed. He has shown a real ability in bringing modern efficiency methods into the hotel business, which has not been without its

opportunities for them. He has been particularly happy in the adaptation of modern and highly scientific accountancy systems to the operation of large hotels. And yet, if it had not been by odd circumstance, he might today have been a railroad executive instead of a hotel one. It was hardly twenty years ago when young Boomer (today he has barely attained the forty-fifth year of his life) found himself in Chicago, working as a stenographer for the Illinois Central at sixty dollars a month. That wage barely supported him; gave him little opportunity for expenditures outside of his bare sustenance. Winter was coming on and Boomer wanted a new overcoat. But he lacked the price of it. He had assumed obligations that seemingly did not permit of his purchasing such a luxury. . . . Yet winter was oncoming; and winter in Chicago is rarely a mild sort of affair.

Suddenly he thought his way out of his dilemma. He could not afford an overcoat. He could not stay in Chicago throughout the winter without an overcoat. Ergo. He would go somewhere where an overcoat would not be a necessity. . . .

Florida!

No one needed overcoats down there. Being a railroad employe gave him the opportunity of getting a railroad pass. He grasped the opportunity; and three days later found himself at Miami where an old friend connected with the Florida East Coast hotels (built and operated by the railway company of the same name) gave him a position in that organization. . . . That marked his beginnings in the hotel business. He worked steadily forward and upward. He was associated in the direction of the Nassau Hotel, at Long Beach upon Long Island, and then in the opening and first direction of the Hotel Taft at New Haven. Charles P. Taft, who had builded the New Haven house, became interested in the building of the McAlpin and brought that elaborate enterprise to Boomer's attention. In its size and scope the young *hotelier* saw the McAlpin as a rare opportunity for the development of novel ideas, hitherto quite foreign to the business of hotel keeping. . . . He was given the McAlpin. His imagination and his common sense supplied the ideas, and put them into actual effect.

This combination of imagination and common

THE MENU CARD OF THE DINNER TO H. R. H. THE PRINCE OF WALES

Dinner in honour of
Field Marshal Viscount Kitchener of Khartoum
G.C.B., O.M., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E.
given by
The Pilgrims of the United States
on Monday, the eighteenth of April
One thousand, nine hundred and ten
at The Waldorf-Astoria

DINING-LIST FOR A BANQUET TO FIELD MARSHAL KITCHENER

sense has continued to carry Boomer forward rapidly in the hotel world. In conjunction with the genius, the great prestige and the resources of General du Pont, it brought him, a little less than five years ago, into the overlordship of The Waldorf-Astoria, and then, shortly afterwards, into that of two famous out-of-town houses, the Bellevue-Stratford of Philadelphia (as we have already seen, successor to Boldt's wonderful little original Bellevue) The Willard in Washington (successor to a long-famed hotel of the same name), and the Windsor Hotel of Montreal. Following the decided tendency in hotel management upon both sides of the Atlantic to consolidate and operate hotels in groups or chains, these three great houses—of attained reputation and distinction—in New York, in Philadelphia, in Washington, and in Montreal, are now operated as a group of the exclusive de-luxe type of hostelry. . . . In addition to them, Mr. Boomer two or three years ago became the directing head of Sherry's, a restaurant enterprise of unrivaled distinction to New Yorkers. For a number of years Sherry's had stood in its own great building at the southwest corner of Fifth

Avenue and Forty-fourth Street. The steady onrush of business up Fifth Avenue brought about the transformation of the restaurant building into a bank. Sherry's was without a home, and mourned by whole generations of New Yorkers who suddenly found themselves deprived of something which had become very near and dear to them.

To meet this very real loss to New Yorkers, Boomer reorganized Sherry's and built a new home for it, covering the entire block front in Park Avenue, from Forty-ninth to Fiftieth Streets. This is the new Park Avenue—the broad boulevard which came into existence through the conversion of the Grand Central Terminal from steam to electric power. This great change was made possible by the elimination of the former black and smoky railroad switching yard that stretched from the old Grand Central Station northward for more than a dozen blocks, before the tracks finally entered the Park Avenue tunnel. The substitution of cleanly electricity for this smoke and dirt was thus responsible for the placing of the entire railway yard in a sort of sub-cellar construction and the building

of a street and splendid bordering edifices in its place.

So came the new Park Avenue—the street of the most elegant apartments and the smartest restaurants of the town. And so came Sherry's in amongst all of these, a great, dignified sixteen-story building with its first two floors given to the varied purposes of the famous restaurant, and the floors above to elaborate groupings of apartments.

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Boomer was not content merely to make certain changes in the personnel of the establishment; he at once decided upon certain rather sweeping changes in its physical characteristics. It is but fair to him to say that wherever it has been humanly possible he has retained the older members of the staff. He is alive to the fact that in a hotel as firmly founded in the public favor as The Waldorf-Astoria has been these thirty years, tradition counts for much. The house has many patrons—some of them permanently residing beneath its roof—who have been with it almost since the very day of its inception. They can

return to it today knowing that the great ideals of the founder have been cherished and—whenever and wherever possible—adhered to; and this despite the fact that the hotel stands at one of the most prominent street-corners of a vast metropolitan city where nothing ever is permitted to stand still for any appreciable length of time. . . .

I have already referred to the final abolition of the *porte-cochère,* in the Thirty-fourth Street façade of The Astoria, which at the beginning was Boldt's especial pride; also to the fact that the long wheel-base of the modern motor-car gradually rendered this showy adjunct of the house—designed for carriage days—little other than waste space, and in a section of the city of New York where ground-floor space of any sort is almost worth a king's ransom. Boldt, himself, decreed the abandonment of this relic of the hotel's beginning; not without some real sadness at the thoughts of the pleasant days that it brought to him. In its place he filled in the street wall of the house and created a magnificent new room for its ground floor, which he promptly named the Istrian Room, after one of the Italian

provinces. It generally is known, however, as the Italian Room.

This large apartment, originally fitted for a writing, reading and lounging room, was an almost superfluous addition to the already huge ground-floor of The Waldorf-Astoria. The hotel has not only infinitely greater lounging-space than the average New York hostelry —the tremendous value of real-estate upon Manhattan Island prohibiting almost all builders other than families with the vast resources of the Astors, from indulging in such luxuries—but even more than the large hotels of Europe. In fact it is this alone that to many folk imparts such a genuinely foreign atmosphere to The Waldorf-Astoria.

*

Boomer, already skilled and alert in hotel planning, decided upon a rearrangement of a portion of the ground-floor of the Astoria side of the hotel. . . . One of the house's great operating questions has long been the multiplicity of its street entrances. In a city as large as New York the problem of the complete safeguarding of the guests of a hotel is no small one. From

its very beginning the Waldorf-Astoria has employed a complete force of its own policemen and detectives, varying at different times all the way from a half a dozen up to fifteen or twenty men, trained and skilled for the difficult rôles allotted to them. For a number of years, Joseph Smith, now one of the assistant managers of the hotel, was at the head of this department. Before that "Joe" had been a famous Scotland Yard detective. There was hardly a British crook or an international one whom Joe could not recognize, at first sight.

The knowledge that he gained in the streets of London stood him in good stead in the streets of New York. For years his vigilance over the guests of The Waldorf-Astoria has been unceasing. Twelve hours at a stretch—sixteen—twenty—twenty-four—even thirty-six—in lonely vigil have been as nothing to him when necessity has demanded. . . . The job of a hotel detective is never an easy one. In a hotel of the type of The Waldorf-Astoria, bringing to its doors distinguished guests from every corner of the world, it is a particularly difficult one. The guests of the Waldorf need little protection from one another.

This is not always true of hotels, but is always true of houses of the high type of the one that George C. Boldt founded. Yet, no matter how high the character of the hotel, the necessity for eternal vigilance in the protection of guests remains. In fact, the higher the type of hotel, the more acute the necessity for this protection. . . .

In the original plan for the ground-floor of The Astoria two main entrances were provided into Thirty-fourth Street, one upon either side of the enclosed carriage-drive. There were other entrances, of course, one opposite the bank of the elevators back of the office and another at the Astor Court end of Peacock Alley. But the two entrances that flanked the *porte-cochère* were supposed to be the main portals of the great hostelry. As a matter of fact, one of them—the one to the west of the carriage-way—presently became, through habit and convenience, the chief entrance. The one to the east, although enjoying a degree of popularity, was, from the point of view of the administration of the house at least, an awkward arrangement. From the main office it was quite impossible to watch those who came or went through it.

Mr. Boomer, with characteristic decision, made up his mind to close this superfluous doorway. In its place he cut a street doorway into the Italian (Istrian) Room, which he proceeded to turn into a candy shop *de luxe,* of an elegance such as even sophisticated New York has rarely known.

Candy had been sold, of course, in The Waldorf since the days of its inception, at its several news and cigar-stands. But it was not until the coming of the Eighteenth Amendment that the business of merchandising candy became a fixed and important side-line of the larger American hotels; that the soda-water fountain came in many of them to replace the once highly popular bar. . . . Even in pre-Volstead days Mr. Boomer at the McAlpin had pioneered in the sale of candy in large volume. He brought the idea to the Waldorf and it there repeated the success in the large hotel at the west end of that city square.

Only the candy-shop of The Waldorf-Astoria was of a sort not before known in American hotels. It was *de luxe,* in every sense of that somewhat abused phrase. It served soda—in the adjoining corridor and palm-garden—but it

did not concede a public soda-fountain. That would not have been The Waldorf-Astoria's way of doing the thing. For it the soda-fountain—a very modern and complete construction, if you please—was carefully hidden in a convenient nearby pantry. . . . It became not merely the adjunct of the candy-shop, but also that of the tea-room. For Mr. Boomer's original idea of tea service each afternoon in the Italian Room soon had to be abandoned. Its very popularity defeated it. The Italian Room was nowhere nearly large enough. And arrangements were made to set up the tea buffet and service each afternoon in the great foyer of the Rose Room restaurant on the Astoria side of the Fifth Avenue frontag of the hotel.

The success of this enterprise has been due in no small degree to the skill, diplomacy and energy of Mrs. Leonora Rector Crook, formerly of Natchez, Mississippi, who has had full charge of it since its inception. Mrs. Crook, a hostess born to her purple, as well as trained to it, gives afternoon tea at the Waldorf-Astoria a flare which it does not always obtain at other places. Despite the fact that a similar institution—al-

though upon a considerably smaller scale—at the corner of Sherry's, in Park Avenue, is also under her sole jurisdiction, she is present invariably at the tea-hour, plays the rôle of hostess to the guests of a large hotel with a grace and skill near to perfection.

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At the same time that he was creating the candy-shop, Boomer gave sharp attention to the possibilities—and the necessities—of the roof of the hotel. While the roof-garden as a New York institution now goes back more than forty years —the first real garden of this sort having been opened simultaneously with the completion of the Casino Theater in 1882—Mr. Boldt was loath to accept the suggestion that such a feature be added to the equipment of the original Waldorf. It was urged to his attention that a roof-garden would not enhance the outside appearance of the structure. The architect, Mr. Hardenbergh, had given much thought to the façades of the then new hotel in Thirty-third Street, and a sum of money was expanded in making them diversified and beautiful to a degree that would hardly be

conceivable in the highly-efficient New York of today. The roof of the original hotel was the especial pride of the architect. Sharp-pitched and turreted and broken with many quaint dormers, it gave the last accent to the spirited touch of the entire design.

To spoil this roof with a garden, which meant, of course, a considerable area of flat space?

"Impossible," said the architect.

"Impossible," added Mr. Boldt.

Yet when, four years later, The Astoria came into being, the roof-garden became one of its most distinguishing features. It was a huge place—and a very lovely one. New York adored it. To go to the top of the house on a hot summer's night and sit in quietude and comfort, sipping at light refreshments and listening to an impeccable orchestra, to catch the inevitable breeze off the sea or from the land over the crest of the distant Orange mountains—here was a creature comfort of which New York had wotted not before. . . . While in the winter Boldt flooded the tile-paved roof and gave Manhattan her first aerial ice-skating rink!

*

Yet, when all was said and done, the open-air roof-garden—viewed particularly as an all-year institution—was a good deal of a problem. The seasons when it could be used were comparatively short and far between, and even in these unexpected weather conditions were apt to play sad havoc with it. So Boomer proceeded to make an all-season institution out of the roof-garden, with an ultimate tremendous success. He transformed the open-air place, with the sky alone as its ceiling, into a closed-in series of restaurants which would be comfortably available for use on the coldest night of the year, and which in summer, by the aid of giant windows which could be completely opened, would catch the cooling breezes as quickly as the open itself.

In this task of transformation he was aided by Mr. John J. Pettit, who had had much experience and skill in this very sort of thing. New Yorkers will long remember the opulent beauty of the great dining-room of the Claridge Hotel —an institution which the passage of the well-known Eighteenth Amendment doomed to destruction. It was Pettit who made that great room possible. And it was Pettit who took the

splendid open-air roof-garden of the Waldorf-Astoria and made it more attractive and an all-year possibility to both the patrons and the management of the hotel.

*

Other significant changes were made upon the advent of the present Boomer régime but these that have just been given stand out as the most pretentious of all. . . . One other must be recorded, however. The passing of the historic four-sided drinking bar in the men's café deserves at least a tiny paragraph in the chronicles of The Waldorf-Astoria. On the night of the thirtieth of June, 1919, this institution of the older New York ceased to exit—officially at any rate. Because The Waldorf has always prided itself upon being a fully law-abiding institution, it was but a few weeks thereafter that the entire structure was taken down and cut into souvenirs which were eagerly sought by those who could not think of the old place without whole floods of recollections welling up within them.

The room itself remains, and promises long to remain—both as a café and a reading and a lounging room for the men patrons of the house.

But the four-sided bar is gone—into oblivion. Law decreed its passing, as well as that of all its fellows. It has been a law that has cost The Waldorf-Astoria dearly. For, as a law-abiding citizen, it has been forced to sit by helplessly and see smaller restaurants here and there and all over New York flagrantly violating that law, to their own great prosperity and profit and to a corresponding loss on the part of the larger hostelries that—no matter what their innermost feelings may be—comply with it, to its last letter.

*

Prohibition and the World War together presented many and unusual problems to the larger hotels of New York. . . . Yet, long before the Armistice was even anticipated there came as a direct sequence of the conflict a great onrush of business to their portals. At a time when their labor problems were the most perplexing of their entire history—when they were giving generously both of money and of men to the cause of the Allies—they were called upon to handle more people continuously than at any time before in their history. And with a depleted staff at every

turn. And all labor conditions much demoralized.

New York, as the chief point of embarkation and disembarkation of the United States, passed through its ample gates not merely the organized fighting forces of the nation, but a great number of "casuals" and other men —women, too— whose comings and goings were incidental, although essential, to the waging of the conflict. These imposed a great burden upon her hotels— even though two of the largest of them were being opened in that very hour.

New York became a great international stopping-point. Now was the dream of George C. Boldt coming true. The Waldorf-Astoria was international; really and truly and tremendously international. Not an occasional visitor of renown from overseas but a constant stream of them. You could stand in Peacock Alley and in a single day hear spoken most of the languages of the civilized world.

*

Nineteen hundred and nineteen was a year of unusual distinction in the annals of the huge hotel at the intersection of Fifth Avenue and

Thirty-fourth Street. From the very beginning of that year—in fact for a very few weeks even before its beginning—our men and women in uniform came trooping back to it. In The Waldorf-Astoria they ate their first home meals again—and loved them; drank their American coffee once more—and loved it, too. And the chatter in the corridors ran of St. Mihiel and Bordeaux and the Argonne and Coblentz.

In September of that year John J. Pershing came and was entered upon the roster of the register-books of The Waldorf-Astoria—one is almost tempted to add, "of course." He was dined and feted within the walls of the hotel, and then —upon a memorable autumn day never to pass out of the minds of those who witnessed it—he rode proudly by it down the Avenue, at the head of the First Division, alone, erect—as if a ramrod had been thrust into the back of his coat—mounted upon a black charger, while three million folk roared out to him their welcome home.

Other divisions marched down the Avenue that year—Fifth Avenue, Street of Great Parades—which had seen all manner of them, from the Grant Memorial Procession and the 1892

PRESIDENT HARDING LEAVING THE WALDORF-ASTORIA (1921), OSCAR IN ATTENDANCE

(Photograph by Underwood & Underwood)

Columbus Night celebration; which had thrilled to the St. Patrick's Day parades and the night pageants of the old Barnum & Bailey circus to the magnificent annual displays of the police department and of the fire department, marked in its diary 1919 as The Year of Parades. . . .

*

Hard upon the heels of Pershing and his magnificent reception came that of the King and Queen of Belgium. There was, in the hearts of New Yorkers, a real affection for this heroic royal couple that the city has rarely ever expressed. New Yorkers had read with bitterness and indignation of their banishment from the little land which they had loved so dearly and ruled with such gentle hands, and had rejoiced when they had been permitted by the fortunes of war to return to their beloved Brussels. The coming of the twain to the United States, announced but a very little time in advance of their actual arrival upon its shores, marked the beginning of an event for which one had to go back all the way to 1860 and the visit of Edward, Prince of Wales, to find a real parallel.

So quickly did the royal couple come, in fact,

that The Waldorf-Astoria was all but unprepared for their arrival. There was little opportunity for the training and the rehearsal—in typical Boldt fashion—of the employes of the house to their especial tasks. In truth, in order to bring one of its corridors up to the very maximum of brightness and freshness and newness it was necessary, on the very eve of their coming to the hotel, to work a great force of painters and decorators throughout the entire night.

The hotel had been given to understand that the royal party would first come to its doors upon the seventh day of October. Therefore on the last day of September it had set forth entirely to redecorate the long main corridor on the main floor of the Waldorf side of the house, confident that even under a moderate degree of pressure upon the workmen, the entire job could be finished within six calendar days. The unforeseen illness of President Woodrow Wilson necessitated many changes being made at the last moment for the official reception of the royal visitors from Belgium. Hardly had the decorators erected their complicated mass of scaffolding in the main corridor of the old Waldorf be-

fore word arrived that the King and Queen would be at the doors of the hotel within forty-eight hours.

To the management of the house then, a real situation presented itself. Enough decoration had already been done to make it vitally necessary that the job be finished, with at least one coat of color. It was finished. That is the Waldorf-Astoria way of doing things. . . . The decorators atop of the scaffolding worked thirty-six hours at a stretch, without rest or relief of any sort, being kept awake during the last stages of the job by frequent and liberal potions of strong black coffee. Two hours before King Albert and Queen Elizabeth entered their private doorway to the Waldorf, the last vestige of the scaffolding was removed and no trace remained of the fevered preparations to make the main corridor bright and beautiful for their reception.

*

No layman can readily understand the vast amount of preparation which went for the entertainment of the first King and Queen that ever visited the United States. No George C. Boldt remained to put his forces through week upon

week of hard drill and rehearsal for the coming of the royal party. Yet be it recorded to the eternal credit of the present administration of the hotel, that no employe rushed forward impulsively but unbidden at the door to greet the royal visitors, and that there was no trouble with the hot-water of the bath, or any other detail of the service. . . . We have progressed. One of the things in which we have progressed is in real democracy. . . . The King and the Queen of the Belgians did not demand or receive accommodations one whit better than those given to Americans themselves in a chief hotel of their chief city. In the royal suite there were no million dollar beds or any other exaggerated luxury of that sort. Any such exhibitions of bad taste were carefully avoided. The beds, the linens, and every other detail of the apartments assigned to the visitors from overseas were Waldorf-Astoria standard and nothing more. Which, in turn, means that they were the very best obtainable—anywhere and at any price.

Similarly, the food furnished the royal party was the same as that furnished to the other twelve or fifteen hundred guests of the hotel who were

being entertained under its roof at the same time. In their private dining-room the King and Queen ordered from the general menu-card, just as the guest from New Bedford or Tallahassee or Minneapolis was ordering from the same card at the same time in the other dining-rooms of the house. Only, for convenience, a group of a half dozen cooks was set aside to meet the wishes of the party—in itself a sizable affair, and numbering with the official entertainment staff sent up from the State Department at Washington, for the occasion, more than ninety persons. It occupied not only the capacious third floor of The Waldorf, but overflowed into a considerable portion of the fourth floor.

The Belgian monarchs stopped twice at The Waldorf-Astoria upon their memorable journey to America—once, when they first arrived in the United States and, again, when they were just leaving it. In each case the arrangements for their entertainment were much the same. The state apartments and those that immediately surrounded were not only set aside for their comfort and convenience, but, following a custom inaugurated in the Boldt administration of the

house, the wide entrance portal in Thirty-third Street nearest Fifth Avenue, was set aside for the exclusive use of the royal party. This, together with a portion of the main-floor hall of The Waldorf and the bank of elevators at the southeastern corner of the building, made a completely private entrance for the visitors. Temporary partitions separating it from other portions of the hotel were camouflaged behind magnificent decorations of flags, of flowers and of greens. On the initial visit there was among the flowers a great bunch of orchids, the personal gift of Mrs. Wilson to the Queen, forwarded by special messenger from the White House.

Of all the facilities, perhaps the one that King Albert enjoyed the most was the special telephones which were installed in advance of his coming and which had direct connections with one of the main exchanges of the telephone company. The King was never tired of inquiring as to the remarkable long-distance telephone facilities that America offers. And when he was far across the North American continent, in his royal suite in a San Francisco hotel, he had a rare joy in getting The Waldorf-Astoria staff on the

long-distance 'phone and having an extended 3200 mile conversation with it.

*

And finally, in that autumn of 1919, Albert Edward, Prince of Wales. In the case of the successor to the throne of Great Britain, however, he brought his royal residence with him in the shape of a huge British warship, the *Renown*. It lay at anchor in the Hudson River off Eighty-sixth Street and remained his official headquarters while he was in this country, at the end of his extended tour through both the United States and Canada, finally taking him back to England. . . . But the likable young Prince not only occupied the state apartments at the Waldorf-Astoria as his official residence on shore, but made great use of special telephone facilities installed for him, including a cable which connected with his private cabins aboard the *Renown*. . . . More than this, he was entertained twice at dinner in the great Ballroom of the Astoria side of the house; once by a group of British societies and again by the late Henry P. Davison and Mrs. Davison. Upon one or two occasions he was to be observed in Peacock Alley

—strictly *incog,* of course—slyly watching the American girl, in one of her favorite habitats.

*

The Waldorf-Astoria in its career has entertained many princes, many of whom did not have titles to their names. A few thousand kings as well. And an incomprehensible number of queens. But never before a king or queen or genuine princely successor to a mighty and historic throne who bore with such grace his dynastic titles.

CHAPTER X

THE WALDORF-ASTORIA OF TODAY

Today the great hotel which George C. Boldt founded in the heart of the city of New York is very much the same as in the days when he was in constant and active command of it. It is alike. And it is different. If he were to re-enter its portals tomorrow he would find it the same Waldorf-Astoria to which he bade good-bye seven years ago—and still a hotel much changed. . . . In seven years much can happen. In these seven years much has happened. The entrance of the United States into the World War and the final termination of that distressing conflict; the coming of national prohibition, the steady onrush and growth of mighty New York—all of these things have left a certain definite impress upon the huge red-brick tavern at the intersection of Fifth Avenue and Thirty-fourth Street. And yet,

to a remarkable degree—for New York, a particularly remarkable degree—the Waldorf-Astoria has retained the individuality, the atmosphere, the real elegance which he, himself, succeeded in imparting to it. That it has so retained these things is perhaps the largest compliment of all to the wit and brain and foresight of its founder.

In the chapters of this book you have seen the upbuilding of the giant structure; first, in 1893, the completion and opening of the original Waldorf, at the intersection of Thirty-third Street and the Avenue and upon the site of the William Waldorf Astor house; then, two or three years later, the addition of the five-story wing just to the west of this building, and finally, in the autumn of 1897, the addition of the truly regal Astoria—the creation of the grand Waldorf-Astoria. You have seen Boldt cutting a unique carriageway into the façade of the Astoria and subsequently blotting it out again; the first ballroom along the Thirty-third Street front of the original Waldorf; the second ballroom, wherein the Bradley-Martins gave their famous party; and finally the third and present magnificent

ballroom of the Astoria side of the hyphenated hotel. . . . All of these changes, and more, have passed in an inevitable succession and yet The Waldorf-Astoria of today is, in all of its physical essentials, The Waldorf-Astoria that George C. Boldt first opened upon the tempestuous evening of the first of November, 1897; in most of its characteristics, the original Waldorf, that he first threw open to a curious and admiring New York a full four and one-half years before that date.

*

Of The Waldorf-Astoria of the first of November, 1897, Peacock Alley was the main thoroughfare; of the Waldorf-Astoria of today, Peacock Alley still remains the chief thoroughfare. The main entrance to it—the entrance used by probably three-quarters of the visitors to the hotel, no matter what their errand—is from Thirty-fourth Street, close beside the Italian room. Here taxicabs deposit their fares, although private motor-cars are more prone to use some one of the Thirty-third Street entrances. . . . The main Thirty-fourth Street door leads in a few steps to the reception offices of the hotel in the most central and commanding position possi-

ble in a house of such vast floor space—the ground-floor space of the Waldorf-Astoria comes to the amazing total of 70,000 square feet. . . . This "pulse of the hotel," as we have already heard Mr. Boldt describing it, has every conceivable facility for the convenience of the men who must work night and day within it. For it goes without saying that the pulse of a huge hotel never may cease beating. There has not been a moment since the Waldorf-Astoria first opened its doors that there has not been a competent aide in charge of its head office.

Upon the broad open desk lie the registers, three or four of them, so that in a pinch, as is frequently done, guests may be received and assigned rooms at the rate of sixty to ninety to the hour. The old-fashioned bulky register of the oldtime hotel long ago went its way into oblivion. The modern register is but a single sheet, properly printed and ruled and affixed to a solid back . . . . Your name goes down upon it. Perhaps you have made a reservation in advance. If you are wise in your day and generation you certainly will have taken that precaution. You mention the fact. The reception-clerk quickly scans his res-

ervation-book for the day; finds your name upon it. He turns quickly to his room-rack: the big wooden chart upon which are not only indicated all the sleeping-rooms of the house that are possibly available, but the special facilities which they possess—private-baths, open fires, unusual features of every sort. If the little space in the rack marked for any room is occupied by a card, it indicates that the room is unavailable for booking. That card may bear the name of a guest who already occupies it, or a special card signifying that it has been "cut out" for special cleaning, decorating or the like. A card tipped sidewise into the space may bear your name and it reminds the clerk that it is the room that he has saved for you. If you are a regular patron of the house it is probable that already he knows your preferences in its rooms, and he has tried to anticipate your wishes and your desires. . . . If you are a stranger and have written ahead for your accommodations, it is more than probable that you have already specified the particular type of room that you desire.

To a layman who has looked into the matter, the most astounding feature in a hotel's sale of

rooms is the fact that it can make any advance reservations, whatsoever, for the simple reason that the tenure of stay of the average guest is almost always a most uncertain matter. In many instances he does not himself know as he signs the register how long he will remain within the house. Business conditions, travel conditions, a thousand and one things may combine to delay his getting away—or take him away before he has anticipated. . . . A steamship stateroom, a Pullman berth, or a theater seat is sold for a fairly definite number of hours. At a certain time each will be vacated and can definitely be offered for sale again. A hotel room may be engaged for a day—and kept for a year. How then can the hotel know when it may again be offered for sale?

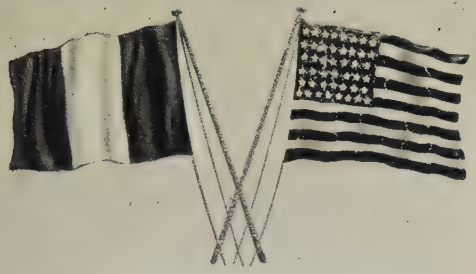
It does not know—not in the case of any specific room. But when a hotel, like The Waldorf-Astoria, has eleven hundred sleeping-rooms for sale, it can go ahead pretty safely on the law of averages. Experience and statistics—based upon long years of actual observation—show about how many people will go out of each type of room each twenty-four hours. . . .

Your taste goes for one of the modest "17" type of room, with perhaps bath, upon the Thirty-third Street side of the house. (The Waldorf-Astoria was one of the first hotels to have a generally uniform plan for each sleeping-floor with the room numbered the same, floor upon floor—the prefix hundred itself indicating the precise floor.) The last time that you stopped in the house you stopped in "517"—and liked it immensely. . . . You mention that fact to the reception-clerk. He glances at the rack. Five hundred and seventeen is occupied; and the occupant does not expect to leave until next Tuesday—he chanced to have made that remark to one of the office clerks, who promptly noted it upon the corner of the card. . . . But here is "417," directly underneath, upon the floor below. It is a nice room. If you hesitate, the room-clerk will bring out a huge plan of the house and show you just how it is arranged—windows, bed, bath, and all of it. . . . If you are particularly finicky and inquire about exposure he will push a button under the counter and by a mechanical device be able to tell you just how the wind is blowing at that particular moment, and whether you are exposed to

it or sheltered from it—desirabilities or undesirabilities according to the nature of the changeable New York climate at that moment. . . . While if you insist, he will ask one of the assistant managers to show you the room itself.

But you do not insist. Four hundred and seventeen will suit you. The instant your decision is made, the number is pencilled opposite your name upon the register, and the vast mechanism of The Waldorf-Astoria begins to move—in your behalf. The room clerk writes your name and room-number upon a small pad; in triplicate. One copy goes to the information desk, so that a man calling upon you within sixty seconds of your acceptance of a room is informed of its number. A second copy goes into the hands of the hallman, who escorts you to the mail department. Mail arriving in advance is therefore placed in your hands before you go to your room for the first time, and again notation is made of your arrival as an actual guest of the hotel. The third copy of the quickly-written paper slip goes to the telephone department—and undergoes a treatment similar to that of the other two points.

All this is done in far less time than it takes



Testimonial Banquet
tendered to
His Excellency Jules J. Jusserand
Ambassador of France to The United States
1902-1924
Dean of the Diplomatic Corps at Washington
1913-1924
Grand Croix de la Legion d'Honneur
Honorary President of various Franco-American Societies, etc
by
The France-America Society
The Federation of French Alliances
and the
American Society of the French Legion of Honor
Saturday evening, November twenty-ninth
Nineteen hundred and twenty-four
The Waldorf-Astoria
New York City

MENU CARD OF THE GREAT BANQUET GIVEN TO AMBASSADOR JUSSERAND

THE COVER OF THE DINING-LIST, BANQUET TO FIELD MARSHAL FOCH

to tell it here. Before the three slips have all been fully noted upon the records of the hotel you are in one of the three reception elevators just at the rear and upon your way aloft to your apartments. . . . Within the half-hour—certainly within the hour—you will receive a typewritten slip showing your name and your address as you have written them upon the register and the rate per day which you are paying for your quarters. In this way there is little chance for misunderstanding.

*

Across the main corridor from the reception-office—at which is kept all the mail for the men-guests of the house who have arrived; that for the women invariably is sent direct to their rooms—are the other office centers of the house: the cashiers, the bookkeepers and those of the managing editor. In still closer proximity to it is the small and easily-accessible office of the assistant manager who is "upon the floor" at any particular moment. While close by in a still different direction are the famous pneumatic tubes installed by Mr. Boldt, which continue to be used even though the perfection of the interhouse telephone service

has largely supplanted them. Adjoining these is the mail-room, which in normal times handles from two to three thousand letters and packages each day. . . . Across the side corridor from it is the great safe—with individual compartments for the storage of money, jewelry and valuable papers, for the free use of any guest of the hotel. This safe-deposit facility is one of the real services that the modern American hotel offers its patrons. The Waldorf-Astoria was the first house to place this upon an individual basis, with individual keys and boxes, similar to that which one would find in any first-class banking institution.

All of these actual business facilities of the house are closely grouped about its main office. Here is the booth at which one may purchase tickets for the theater or the opera, or for concerts and exhibitions of every sort, and never for a fee of more than fifty cents above the box-office price; and here the office of the Western Union Telegraph Company, open from seven in the morning until midnight and with wires reaching not only to every corner of the United States, but, by cable, to every corner of the civilized

world. Here the public telephone booths, with a reach across and over the entire continent, and here the porter's office where one may buy railroad tickets and seats and berths to almost every part of North America. The head porter's job in a hotel like The Waldorf-Astoria is no sinecure. Yet Dennis Coleman in a number of years of it has only managed to get white-haired. That he retains his affability and his youth, and his hosts of friends, both far and near, is a tribute to Dennis Coleman, and not to his difficult position in the hotel.

The compact booth upon the main-floor which he occupies and from which he not only engages your railroad accommodations but also tells you just what time the first train in the morning leaves St. Louis for Jefferson City, or just the hour and minute when the *Majestic* may confidently be expected to dock, or what is a good hotel in which to stop in Fort Worth, Texas, is but a small part of Coleman's principality. If you wish to see more, he will lead you down to the high-vaulted basement of the Astoria and into a room of almost interminable length which is completely lined on either side from floor to ceiling

with the bags and boxes and the trunks of travelers—several thousand of them all the while. There are baby-carriages and runabouts for the children, and crutches and wheel-chairs for invalids. Once a white donkey was stored there for a week. Some of these things come for a few days and some stay for years. . . . Yet for every one of these things separate and careful and individual records must be kept. The Waldorf-Astoria can take no chances with the property of others.

Coleman's job runs well outside of the hotel. For one thing, he is a baggage-transfer company. He has four wagons and a motor-truck for this service, each immaculately kept and emblazoned with the name and trademark of The Waldorf-Astoria. On a busy day, such as the sailing or arrival of an important steamer, he will handle all the way from one to two hundred trunks and pieces of heavy luggage to or from the pier. While upon the pier he has a representative in the distinctive hotel uniform to look after the needs of the hotel's patrons—at a time which always is nervously intense. . . .

Around his booth are racks for railroad time-

tables and up-to-date directories of nearly a hundred important cities both in America and overseas. Within a stone's throw from him is a steamship booking office, which will arrange for your immediate accommodations to any corner, far or near, of the seven seas, in addition to dispensing further travel information. . . . The Waldorf-Astoria is indeed an international hotel —in its arrangement, its atmosphere, the files of foreign papers in its reading-room and its employes in every quarter, who speak not only French and German demanded by its founder, but many other tongues too, particularly Spanish and Portuguese, which have become highly essential with the steady increase of South American and Central American visitors to the great metropolis of North America. . . . Nor is this all. In Europe The Waldorf-Astoria maintains its own agencies—in both London and Paris in conjunction with the headquarters of the American Express Company; in Paris it also keeps its own representative, Mr. E. P. Hotelier, the year round, to meet the convenience and necessity of its patrons. Its service goes far beyond its actual walls. It has its own office in Chicago and is

opening a chain of offices in South America. All of these are at the full command of its patrons. . . .

*

The Waldorf-Astoria is first a hotel for enjoyment, but business isn't slighted. You may dictate your letters to the corps of efficient stenographers always on duty in a corner of the reading room or drift into the several stock-broker's offices that occupy the great ground floor of the hotel—one of them is ensconced in the original Waldorf ballroom that was Boldt's pride at the outset and which was speedily outgrown by its own popularity; another is in the once-famed Turkish Room, and another in the so-called Marie Antoinette Room, both of these also rendered unnecessary when the establishment was expanded into the huge Astoria. Or you may lounge or dance or dine to your heart's content. If you choose the last you will find a wide and varied range of opportunity open to you. The two main restaurants still stand upon the long Fifth Avenue frontage of the hotel—even though the house has refused an annual rental of $165,00 for them. It has allowed, as we

have just seen, a certain portion of its somewhat obsolete Thirty-third Street frontage to go for commercial purposes, and has even permitted the far end of its Thirty-fourth Street outlook to go to a high-grade commercial house—at a figure practically equaling its profits from its one-time bar—but it has hung tenaciously to its beautiful dining-rooms that look out into Fifth Avenue. . . . You have seen the creation of each of them: first The Waldorf one—now known as the Empire Room—rich in its wonderful paneling and woodwork; and then, upon The Astoria corner, the Rose Room, of almost exactly identical size and proportion.

The ample site of the Astoria made it possible to develop a great lobby or foyer outside of the Rose Room, and this huge apartment still forms one of the most popular lounging places in the entire roomy hotel. Into the foyer descends the main stair—The Waldorf-Astoria is not too newfangled to boast a great stair upon which a whole regiment might easily be drilled—and here in the afternoon the formal tea is served, while again each day—after dinner—a wonderful orchestra plays for a couple of hours. On Sunday eve-

nings this after-dinner concert reaches its most formal proportion. The entire foyer is set as a concert hall, with row upon row of small gilt chairs and a program, of almost symphonic proportions, given to a selected audience which not only fills every seat but expands into the adjoining rooms and upon the reaches of the main stair. . . . The great radio audience is well acquainted with The Waldorf-Astoria orchestra. For musicianship it has become one of the institutions of New York.

The most distinguished feature of this foyer—aside from its sumptuous fireplace and mantel, two fine pieces of heroic statuary: *Vanity,* by Guarnerio, and *Night,* by Ives, and a vast painting of a Norwegian landscape, the gift of Mr. Boomer to the room—is the great clock, a curious piece of elaborate handiwork that always had a high place in the affections of Mr. Boldt. He purchased it very soon after the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago, for which it had been built by the celebrated and historic Goldsmiths' Company of London. . . . The huge timepiece originally was valued at more than $25,000. It stands twelve feet in height and

carries four faces, which are supposed to record the time of New York, Greenwich, Paris and Madrid. It is surmounted by a miniature of the Statue of Liberty and is equipped with chimes which strike each quarter-hour when the clock is in operation. Around the octagonal sides of the clock various scenes, as well as the busts of well-known men and women, are executed in bas-relief in solid silver. Small figures, likewise of silver, but heavily gilded, and representing different sports, surround it. These traverse the clock when it is in operation. As a matter of fact, it is rarely operated. The complicated mechanism has a way of capriciously getting out of order.

*

Reference has been made already to the highly-popular candy shop in the Italian Room and, in a still earlier chapter of this book, to the huge two-storied and balconied palm-garden of The Astoria, with its unusual medallions close to the ceiling. This room, done in stunning shades of blue and fitted as a salon, is perhaps the most popular of all the lounging rooms of the hotel. It closely adjoins an earlier and similar room of

The Waldorf side of the building, which originally was equipped with a revolving dome, in order to open it to the sky in the summertime. This was in the days before The Astoria was built, however, when the original Waldorf was adjoined by the pleasant sunshiny open garden of the John Jacob Astor residence. When came The Astoria, the revolving dome ceased to be of any real value. Artificial light and artificial ventilation replaced it.

No tour of the ground floor of The Waldorf-Astoria could omit the Oak Room—variously called the Red Room, or the Library, of the original Waldorf, or the huge Second ballroom, eighty-five feet by one hundred, in which we saw the Bradley-Martins having their famous party. This is now known as the South Café and is used, with the assistance of an electric grill at its far end, for luncheons, for overflow dining, and upon winter nights for dancing and supper in the late evening and after the theater. . . . The North Café, along the Thirty-fourth Street side of the house, remarkable for its really magnificent oak carvings, is today the popular men's restaurant of the establishment. Between it and the South

Café is the men's reading-room, lounge and café, which once housed the famous four-sided bar and which now has its greatest patronage at the lunch-hour. For as the more strictly commercial of New York's varied lines of business have swept up to the southerly walls of The Waldorf-Astoria, the hotel has developed a luncheon trade almost unparalleled among houses of its class. Three thousand lunches—all different and served a-la-carte (the house has rarely conceded the table d'hote in any form whatsoever) represent a real tax upon the cuisine which is not easily estimated.

Neither would any complete tour of the ground-floor of the house omit such further facilities for its guests as the news-stand, with additional opportunities for the purchase of tickets for the theater or the opera, the photographer's booth (in connection with a studio upon an upper floor) or the drug-store, for the particular convenience of the hotel's patrons. These are all a part of The Waldorf-Astoria service; just as the barber-shop (with twenty-four chairs), the beauty parlor and the Turkish baths in the basement are a further part of that service. The modern hotel guest is a many-sided and fastidious person. The

modern hotel that attempts to meet his tastes and his wishes must needs have a very complete equipment.

*

It is upon the first floor of The Waldorf-Astoria that the provisions for the comfort and luxury of its guests—even those who tarry beneath it but for a few brief hours—reach their highest degree. When we saw the building and the opening of The Astoria side of the house we saw the Astor Gallery (modeled after the famous Soubise Palace, in Paris) and the Great Ballroom coming first into their own. Even after all these years they have continued to hold their own. One or two other hotel ballrooms, slightly larger in actual seating capacity, have been builded into the newer hostelries of New York, but none more elegant, nor capable of more varied uses.

Take the great ballroom. It is Sunday. The ballroom is a church. The Reverend Mr. Murray is holding his eleven o'clock service and it is crowded. On other days of the week Dr. Murray holds services in an inner room upon the Waldorf side of the house—but on Sunday mornings

the resources of the Grand Ballroom are strained for the two thousand folk who attempt to come within it. . . . On Monday, the Grand Ballroom is Carnegie Hall—Carnegie Hall, *de luxe*. Mr. Bagby is holding one of his Musical Mornings and we have seen already the solid place that they fill in the inner circles of New York society. . . . On Tuesday, Education: the profound Society of This or That or The Other Thing is holding its semi-annual session and pundits are reading their reports or making their speeches to solemn bespectacled auditors. Wednesday, the Drama, with a group of college boys in wigs and corsets and skirts and pink fleshings disporting themselves in some revue or other entertainment; Thursday, Literature, some world traveler discoursing learnedly but amiably on Hindu poetry or, with the aid of a projection lantern or the ubiquitous motion-picture projector, on the fiords of Norway or the glaciers of Alaska; Friday, a dinner, of the South Carolina Society or that of North Dakota, of the Sons of the Susquehanna or the Pilgrims of New England; and Saturday, perhaps a smart dance. It is all in the week's work. And in the chronicles

of The Waldorf-Astoria no more than a typical week.

*

Whether the Astor Gallery is thrown into combination with the Grand Ballroom, as is frequently done for the larger events (upon the occasion of the election of Colonel Theodore Roosevelt as President of the United States in the fall of 1904, more than eighteen hundred covers were served at the formal dinner given him by his party to celebrate the event, even the Rose Room and the Empire Room on the main floor being necessary for the reception) or the Ballroom used alone, the Foyer between the two rooms is generally reserved for reception purposes. It is both an unusual and a beautiful room, with its curving stair upon the one side and in the center the huge white marble statue by Benzoni, *The Flight from Pompeii,* so accurately carved that the tips of one's fingers may detect the lava dust upon the garments of the fleeing man and woman.

In this room, as well as in the broad, long corridor without, dinner guests await the signal of Oscar's finger to know that the feast within is

ready. Then, and not until then, the doors are opened. In an upper gallery of the Grand Ballroom a band strikes up a gay march. Dinner is served.

A moderate dinner tonight, if you please; say a mere seven or eight or nine hundred covers. Oscar thinks nothing at all of such a feast. Long ago he planned its details, in connection with Chef Eugene Thomann, down in the kitchens far below. To the committee of arrangements that waited upon him in his compact office on the mezzanine floor of The Astoria Oscar submitted various suggested menus for the feast. . . . A little deliberation. . . . The program of viands is chosen. . . . Oscar pushes a button. Louis appears. Louis, the head banquet waiter, is almost as well known as his chief. He has spent a quarter of a century as *maître d'hotel* of the ballroom floor of the big tavern, which means that he personally has directed the details of some of the biggest and most important functions ever given in America; personally serving persons, the roster of whom alone would make the foundations for the very biggest of international *Who's Who.*

Louis has the bearing of a general and the manner of a diplomat. He flanks Oscar as his chief conducts the committee of arrangements up the short flight of marble main-stairs that leads from the office of the *maître d'hotel* to the ballroom floor. The final details are arranged upon the scene of the forthcoming function. . . The committee can go home with free mind and free conscience. The dinner is as good as served.

*

It is the night of the dinner. The committee talked vaguely about eight or even nine hundred; cautiously, however, it ordered but seven hundred. And precisely 704 persons come to the banquet. . . . It is extremely difficult for even the very best-seasoned and experienced committee of arrangements to estimate exactly how many persons are coming to a dinner. Folk have such an abominable habit of holding off in their decisions until the eleventh hour. . . . But at seven-fifteen in the evening just seven hundred people have entered the Astor Gallery, which is being used tonight as a reception-room. . . . The other four come straggling in within the next three-quarters of an hour.

The upstair preparations for the entertainment of the seven hundred began more than three hours before. Tables have been laid, an army of decorators has made the Grand Ballroom gay with flags and greens and brilliant flowers, the linen and the silver have been set. At the stroke of five, Louis takes his place at a table set close to the ballroom door. Upon the table is a great ruled sheet of paper and it bears the names of the men whom he has previously engaged to serve at the function. . . . As each man comes in to report for duty, his name is taken and checked off the list. He repairs to the adjacent serving-room, selects a napkin and a pair of white gloves and takes his place at the table assigned to him, arranges the china, the silver and the place cards and awaits the beginning of the feast.

At this banquet of seven hundred covers there has been arranged—aside from fifteen or twenty men at the long speakers' table upon the dais at the far end of the room, just underneath the pipes of the great organ—a uniform seating of eight persons at each individual table. Eighty-five of these round tables—at the last moment Oscar

put in one or two extra in case the dinner should swell beyond the first estimates for it—and one waiter to each of them, with plenty of provision for the guests of honor upon the dais, means an even hundred waiters for the occasion; in addition there are twenty-five men at the carving tables and a corps of extra men at the dumb-waiters in the service hall which connect with the giant kitchens of the hotel in the basement far below. . . .

*

It is seven-thirty, the hour set for the dinner. . . . Oscar at the door of the Grand Ballroom raises his finger to signify that the feast is ready—upon the precise moment set for it. . . . The doors are opened. . . . In an upper gallery of the Grand Ballroom, a band strikes up a gay march. . . . In sweep the seven hundred diners, with remarkably little confusion, find their tables —for the Committee of Arrangements has distributed accurate printed seating lists in advance —seat themselves and await the dinner. . . . The oysters are set. Are quickly consumed. . . . You catch the faint hum of a buzzer. The small regiment of waiters enters. With a celerity that

is hardly short of marvelous the oyster-plates disappear. . . . The buzzer again. And again the regiment of waiters. This time the soup. . . . The buzzer. The soup-plates disappear. . . . The buzzer. . . . On comes the *filet de sole*. . . . And so it continues—right through to the very end of the feast.

You catch hold of Oscar in one of the corridors, just outside of the banqueting-hall. It is difficult, but it can be done. You imprison him by the lapels of his coat—he of those daily dumb-bell exercises. You demand that he interrupt himself to tell you how it is all done. . . . He is Napoleonic, yet he grants you thirty seconds of his precious time. Napoleon, himself, might have done as much.

"It is rather simple," he says, deprecatingly. "I, myself, press the buzzer. . . . It is the field-marshal's signal and by it move not only my waiters, but the chefs, the carvers and the pantrymen. Thus every dish is served hot—and there are no long and tedious waits between the courses. In less than four minutes after my ringing of the bell, which has a direct connection with the desk of the chef in the kitchens, the waiters

have replaced the oysters with the soup. After that, it is merely a matter of routine, and of rehearsal."

Eugene Thomann, the chef, or one of his assistants especially detailed to the supervision of the cookery for this banquet tonight, is informed by the bell signal when the guests have finally found places and seated themselves. A squad of men is at the ovens on the alert for the buzzing word that the food is to be transferred to the elevators and shot upstairs, in double-quick time. . . . It all represents precision. And prearrangement. Oscar Tschirky will tell you that the serving of seven hundred dinners is no more difficult than that of seven. It is all in knowing the rules of the game. And knowing them through years of hard experience. . . . Three thousand oysters—Blue Point or Cape Cod, as the taste and purses of the diners may prefer—two hundred quarts of soup, five hundred chickens—as a hard task it really is not to be compared with that which confronts the average housewife when she faces the problem of her annual Thanksgiving dinner. It all is a matter of preparedness, organization and discipline. After-

wards Oscar can stand upon the side-lines and watch the action, just as an alert stage-manager from a vantage point behind the wings watches the progress of a play. . . . Only in the case of the unforeseen; in the case of some slight mishap is he required. And then you may be sure that his quick wit, his experience and his ingenuity will be certain to fill the gap.

*

Not all of the dinners that are given upon the historic first floor of The Waldorf-Astoria are served in the Grand Ballroom or even in the Astor Gallery. In reality, despite the fact that all of the larger functions are arranged for these two generously-large rooms, there are at all seasons of the year a great number of smaller functions in progress. Most of these last are held upon The Waldorf side of the floor. Mr. Boldt's remarkable foresight years ago planned against their necessities.

The original state apartments of the house quite naturally were upon its Waldorf side, upon the extreme Thirty-third Street and Fifth Avenue corner of the house. Afterwards these were, to a degree at least, sup-

planted by even larger state apartments in the newer Astoria—consisting of a drawing-room, a dining-room, seven bedrooms and the private baths and other necessary appurtenances to them. The original state apartments were then chiefly given over, more or less, to public entertaining, though there comes an occasional time—like the week of the Horse Show or the Automobile Show—when the house is under tremendous pressure to find beds of any sort for its regular patrons. Then it is that the man from South Bend or Rochester or Wilmington is oft-times more than glad to sleep on a plain, but comfortable, little portable bed amidst the magnificence of the Henri Quatre Room of The Waldorf-Astoria. Perhaps in his waking moments he may ruminate upon the fact that this was the favorite dining-room of the King and Queen of Belgium while they were guests of the house. (There was a something about its color and its warmth and beauty that made especial appeal to these observing monarchs.) In his sleeping ones the guest may dream of the gorgeous apartment peopled by knights of old.

For gorgeous is the word that fits this small,

but exquisite apartment. It is a sadly overworked word to be sure, but how little less than gorgeous is that delicately and illuminated beamed ceiling that might almost have been stolen totally from the Chateau of Blois! . . . And, as if to give a final bit of atmosphere to the room is the painting over the mantel, by Denman, which shows Marguerite de Valois, consort of Henry IV., in hunting costume. . . . Almost all of the furniture in the room is of the period of that "good king of France" and genuinely antique—all of it, in fact, save the elaborate carved screen which is Italian and which was originally carved for the Duc d'Aosta, brother of the late King Humbert. Mr. Boldt always considered this piece one of the best of his many importations for The Waldorf.

Between this corner-room, variously used both as a dining-room and a drawing-room, and the so-called State Dining Room, are a bath and a bedroom—this last once a marvel of ornateness, but in more recent years brought to the simpler forms of modern American sober taste. The chief feature of the State Dining Room, now generally used separately from the state apart-

ments for private dinners of up to fifty or sixty covers, is the remarkable collection of Sèvres china, some forty-eight pieces, painted to order by Dessard for the original proprietor of the hotel. Upon the plates appear the heads of many of the rulers of Europe of that day. Few of them survive.

*

From here on extend other private rooms, suitable for small dinners, meetings, card-parties. One of them, with a well-designed alcove looking down into Fifth Avenue, has a deserved popularity with wedding-parties. Another—the largest of all of them, and still called the Green Room, although in recent years its decorations have been completely modernized and changed from that color—has immediate access to the Grand Ballroom upon the Astoria side of the house and may be used in connection with it. But to the average person interested in delving through the historic hotel, the one room in this part of it which has the largest appeal to him is the so-called Astor dining-room, which was taken from the old Astor mansion upon this site when

DINNER CARD FOR GENERAL PERSHING

MENU OF THE 1919 BANQUET TO CARDINAL MERCIER

it was demolished and which occupies relatively the same position as in earlier years. . . . This was one of the whims of William Waldorf Astor in which he demanded full indulgence. And so when his house first went into the hands of the wreckers, the old dining-room, a special pride of its owner, was carefully taken out, piece by piece, marked and preserved so that it could be set up in the new hotel.

Today it stands—a quaint survival and reminder of past days. The woodwork, ceiling, wall-panels, doors and mantel of black walnut, carved in the sombrous elegance of the early-Victorian, and bearing everywhere the carved initials of the house of Astor, were easily fitted into a room whose dimensions were almost precisely those of the Astor apartment. Into the new room were brought the furniture, the paintings and the draperies of the old, and also the chandelier and the side-lights—of hammered brass, of a weird and fantastic design into which they were fashioned by their Paris makers many decades ago. Their venerability is shown by the fact that they were originally made to hold oil lamps. In the old Astor mansion they were adapted to gas;

and when they came to The Waldorf they were first wired for electricity.

*

To a woman visitor probably the most interesting feature of this quiet old-fashioned corner of The Waldorf-Astoria is its really magnificent china. Little of it is openly displayed, yet Louis —who has been a head waiter upon the floor since first it was opened—will reward her curiosity by leading her into his main pantry and there showing her the carefully kept rows of porcelains and glassware—Sèvres and Wedgwood and even our own beloved Rookwood, Baccarat and Bohemian and Favrile and all the rest of it. . . . There are full half a dozen separate dinner services of elaborate proportions in this corner of the house. The size and the importance of the functions that are held there govern their use. The most famous of all is easily the gold dinner service which was used first at the ball of the Bradley-Martins, again at the dinner for Prince Henry of Prussia, when he was a guest beneath the Waldorf's roof and more recently at the functions in honor of the King and Queen of Belgium, the Prince of Wales, and for our own beloved and

highly-honored Pershing. These were tremendous dinners and demanded tremendous service —each of them.

Yet, in the memory of Oscar Tschirky, the dinner given in 1899 by Rudolph Guggenheim, then Borough President of Manhattan, to the New York City Council, lingers among all the great feasts given under his direction in the past as the most elaborate and beautiful. For the forty guests summoned to this affair, which cost upwards of ten thousand dollars, nightingales sang in a grove of rose trees, uprooted for the occasion, the guests passed into the banquet hall through a grape arbor from which they pulled bunches of the fruit, for which their host had paid several dollars a bunch; there were blue raspberries from a certain famous hot-house, grown especially for the dinner, and a rare vintage uncorked that had been bottled long before the days of the French Revolution. In the center of the table was a pool, in which were reflected masses of orchids, acacias, lilies, and the long-stemmed American Beauty rose just then coming into its first vogue. The favors were jewelled match-boxes for the men and jewelled vinaigrettes for the women, and the

affair was the talk of the town for weeks afterwards. Oscar still speaks of it as one of the most magnificent things of its kind ever done. Other dinners came within the next dozen years to rival it, but not one to exceed. Rudolph Guggenheim had accomplished the peak.

The World War—and national prohibition—ended this sort of thing; perhaps forever. In the difficult days of conflict and of food conservation, public dinners, where they were given at all, were scaled to a degree of simplicity that would have seemed out of the imagination but a few years before. The years of peace and prosperity that have followed the ending of the War seem to have brought but little desire upon the part of Americans for the over-elaborate sort of entertainment. Good taste is a powerful modeller of our desires these days. Good cookery was never more to be desired than for a meal where there is no wine to dull acute perception of fine flavor in these days when law-abiding hotels—The Waldorf-Astoria has never been anything else—may not serve alcoholic drink. Which means, in turn, that The Waldorf has never had a sharper incentive toward the perfection of its cuisine than it has

today. And that it comes as near as possible toward attaining that perfection as it is humanly possible to come, is answered by the huge volume of the business that the hotel continues to do. The imagination of its founder could not easily have anticipated that in 1923 it would be actually serving far more meals than he served within it in 1903. That this could possibly have been accomplished is a real part of the wonderful record of the house. The answer lies in the kitchen of The Waldorf. And to that fascinating subterranean region we now turn our footsteps.

CHAPTER XI

BEHIND THE SCENES IN A BIG HOTEL

No matter how many times a regular patron may return to The Waldorf-Astoria—again and again and again—it is not until he has been conducted behind the scenes, has been permitted to see all of its workings, that he can gain any real idea whatsoever as to the immensity of the enterprise. . . . The perfection of a dinner of seven hundred covers served with exquisite taste and upon the very minute of the appointed time is as nothing if one does not fully understand the mechanism of a kitchen that can prepare such a gigantic feast. In ancient Rome a feast of that sort—ordered by nothing less than a Cæsar—would have been the work of months. In The Waldorf-Astoria in the height of the season they come nightly—and not one to a night, but a half a dozen or even more. And all in addition

to the large regular restaurant business of the hotel. . . .

*

Let us begin at the beginning—at the purchase of the food, itself. The steward's job is one of the most exacting, and one of the least appreciated, in the entire organization of the modern hotel. And one of the most important. The very best of our hotel men in America have come through its hard, hard training, and have not only profited personally thereby but laid the solid foundations for their future success in their profession.

In a house as big as The Waldorf-Astoria the head steward's job is dignified by the title of purchasing agent, which means also that in addition to having various assistants to help carry forward the multifarious details of it, he buys far more than merely the foodstuffs consumed by the hotel—its linen, its fuel, its office supplies, perhaps even its furniture and its carpets as well. The head steward's job is to be measured alongside that of the trained keen-nosed buyers of the big department-stores, save that in this last instance men are trained to buy classes of special-

ties, and in the large hotel one man buys all the specialties, as well as all the staples—and these run in nearly as great a range as for a good-sized retail-store. . . . It is in the purchase of the food-stuffs that the head steward probably will have his greatest possible pride—and his greatest possible opportunity. . . .

The food-markets of New York are excelled by few other cities in all the world. To the epicurean taste of a vast and tremendously rich great city is purveyed not only every imaginable staple of food, but every conceivable novelty as well. . . . The movement of food into the city's markets is unending. It comes by rail, by motor-truck, even still by an occasional horse-drawn farm wagon from Long Island or nearby Jersey, by great steamship and by small fishing schooner. All day long it comes, although it is through the night, and particularly through those abnormally silent hours, for a great city, that just precede the dawn that it comes in steadiest volume. Tradition so ruled long ago. It is close to midnight, for instance, when the city's milk begins to pour into the town. Milk trains from all the pleasant dairy communities for more than two hundred

miles roundabout the metropolis begin arriving at the railroad terminals and huge lumbering trucks to carry their precious liquid freight away from them, so that some time after sun-up it may be at the doorsteps of the city folk.

Similarly tradition formerly ruled that most of the city's marketing—upon a large scale, at least—should be in the wan, early hours of morning. In recent years better sense, and a desire of the marketmen for more comfort for themselves, has made a more sensible readjustment of these hours possible. In the fish-markets, for instance, where formerly it was customary for buyers and sellers alike to gather at from two to three o'clock in the morning, mutual agreement has made it possible to postpone the ringing of the gongs, which officially proclaim the opening of the markets, until seven o'clock, with what benefits to the stewards of the big hotels any of them can tell you.

At the best, marketing for a large hotel is arduous—physically as well as mentally. Despite the success of well-directed efforts to concentrate the distribution of certain forms of food commodities into designated districts, the fact

remains and must continue to remain that in any city of six million folk the problem of shopping for food supplies on a big scale is bound to be a vexatious one. Yet if it had not steadily been standardized in all of its ramifications it today would be an impossible one—in New York at any rate. . . . Occasionally, but not often, The Waldorf-Astoria buys direct from the producer. Occasionally, but not often. It is a sentimental idea that makes great appeal to the novice in the business.

Fat little pork sausage from "Bush Creek Farm," or syrup from "The Maples," or Virginia ham up from "The Plantations" makes good advertising copy but hardly stable enough production for a hotel that serves 5000 meals to its guests on only an ordinary day, in addition to some 2200 more to its employes. It is not as a rule dependable policy. The buying steward does far better in the open markets of a city as great as New York. Not only is he surer of his supply, but of his price. Cheapness is not an essential of the fare at The Waldorf, but—in the interest of the guests quite as much as that of its management—it shops sharply and bargains well

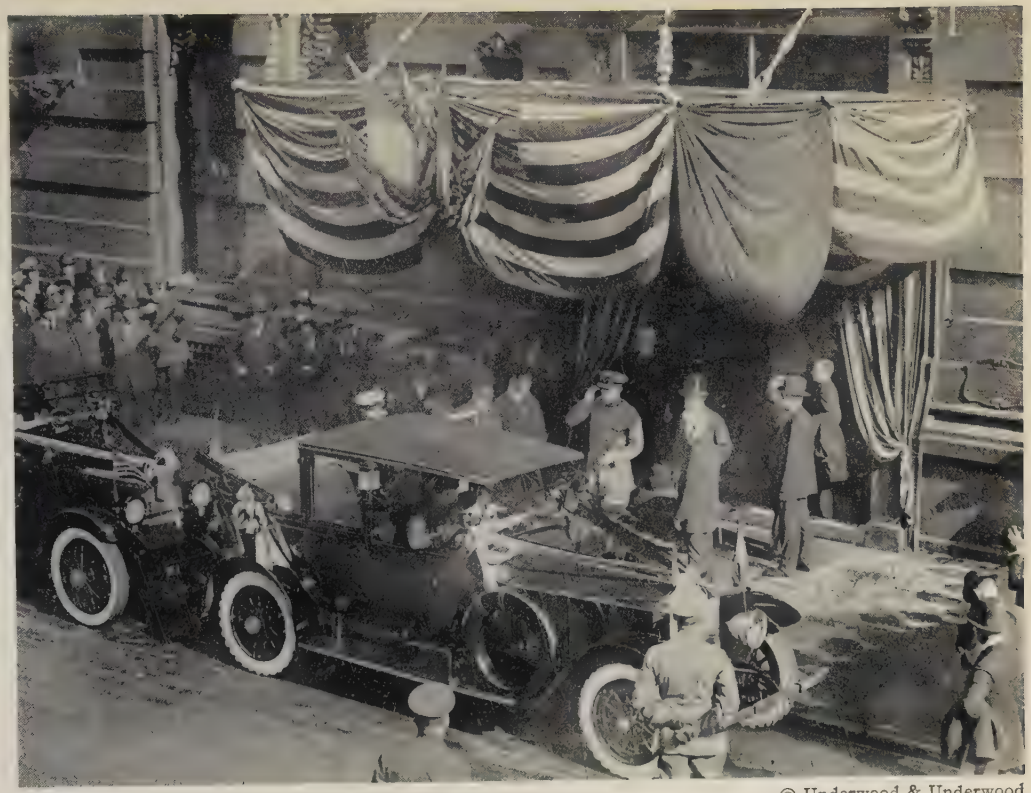
for its foodstuffs, maintaining an average of food prices even less than some of its neighboring hotels of avowedly more popular appeal. . . . You wish an illustration of this. Purchasing Agent Kast—the head-steward of the big hotel—fumbles in his desk and thrusts it before you. A farmer in up-state New York is quoting prices on fresh maple-syrup; on contract he offers to supply from one hundred to one hundred and fifty gallons next spring—at five dollars a gallon.

"I can buy the finest and purest maple-syrup in all creation in the New York markets at three dollars a gallon," says Kast, as he folds up the letter.

Moreover, one hundred and fifty gallons is as nothing to the pancake appetite of The Waldorf-Astoria during the winter months. Nearly seventy-five hundred regular meals a day (guests' and employes'), in addition to the constant special dinners on the busy first floor that we visited in the preceding chapter, make a vast daily consumption of foodstuffs in the big house. On an average day—and taking no account whatsoever of these extra large dinners—

a thousand pounds of beef and a thousand more of poultry, six hundred more of fish, are bought. Kast goes into the market daily for four hundred gallons of milk and five hundred dozen eggs and buys the flour for the manufacture, in the hotel's own bakeries, of two hundred loaves of bread and twelve hundred dozen rolls each twenty-four hours. These amazing totals might be strung out at length. But mere statistics bore. Enough have been shown to depict the large scale of catering for The Waldorf-Astoria.

Enough, too, for staples. It is the problem of the specialties that keeps Kast—himself a hotelman of forty years' experience in the foremost houses of New York—wondering what he is going to do from one day to the next. . . . Take strawberries. A guest comes in from Chicago or Los Angeles in October saying that he has just partaken of this delicious fruit out there. He does not realize that most of the remarkable horticultural work that has been done in the development of the fall strawberry—of the fall raspberry as well—has been effected in California. New York is beginning to do the same



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THE KING AND QUEEN OF BELGIUM—HONORED GUESTS OF THE WALDORF-ASTORIA

thing, however, and by another autumn strawberries and raspberries may become regular features of the Waldorf's bill-of-fare. If they are upon the menu-card of any other New York hotel, they will be upon that of the Waldorf. You can trust Kast for that.

Even as it is, the Florida berries come up into the city markets about New Year's day and thereafter remain upon the menu-card until about the first of August—with very little variation in their selling price to the patron. And with very little variation in the quality, as well. In fact the first of the Florida berries—closely approximating the quality of our Northern berries in the height of their own season—are generally rather better than the last shipments.

Similarly shad begins coming into the New York markets and generally continues arriving until the late spring or the early summer. It is a peculiarly American dish and when properly prepared can be matched for flavor against any other seafood in the world. To be eaten in the highest degree of physical comfort it should be boned before serving. There are few chefs who know how to do this. There is one in The Wal-

dorf-Astoria kitchen that can do it, however, and leave you with the pleasant impression that the succulent shad is no more bony than calf's-foot jelly. . . . Lobster is another seafood that we like to call American, even though it may now be found in many other corners of the globe. Broiled, and served with butter sauce, it is certainly an essentially American production. There are sharp limitations upon its service, however. The game laws of the United States today are a code only a little less sharp than those of the Volstead Act. And far less easily fractured. . . . Mr. Kast does not only have to be a buyer of everything from stationery to sharks' fins, but a lawyer these days as well. He has to watch his step in the game that he serves.

It will, for instance, cost him, personally, twenty-five dollars for any under-sized lobster that the Federal inspectors, who have a habit of calling in occasionally, quite unannounced, may find in the ice-boxes of the hotel. Game-birds are assessed at just twice that figure. Twenty-five years ago or more The Waldorf and its alert contemporaries of that day prided themselves upon the wonderful game that was carried in

their refrigerators, almost the entire year round. . . . A bird, cooked to the turn, with a fine bottle of good red wine, made a combination appealing to most men. But the thing was overdone; terribly overdone. The wild birds of America were being fearfully slaughtered to meet appetites that could not or would not be controlled. And in a sincere effort to encourage their propagation once again it was ruled that no wild bird shot in the open could be offered for sale in any restaurant or hotel.

Yet, today, as of yore, you find, in the season of course, pheasant and Mallard ducks—other game as well—upon the menu-cards of the Waldorf-Astoria; served, of course, both openly and legally. How is it done? The answer is that the ingenuity of America when blocked at one point generally finds another through which it may proceed. The business of raising game-birds in captivity has become a well-developed and highly profitable one. Game comes freely to the markets from these private preserves. Only the government makes strict requirement that it be properly tagged by the Federal inspectors when it is shipped and cooked and served. And that

is the reason why your game-bird comes to you upon the tables of The Waldorf-Astoria with a small lead tag tightly affixed to one of its feet. If that tag were not upon it, Mr. Kast's pocket-book would be apt to be minus a precious fifty dollars.

Similar provisions are made for the protection of venison, even though it is not practicable to attach tags when it is served upon the table. But the main carcass, down in the ice box, must be plainly tagged and marked, showing just where and when the deer was killed and when it was shipped to the New York markets.

*

Certain standards must remain in the ice-boxes practically the entire year round and these form another of Kast's problems. Sole—soon to become a dream under the famous sauce that Marguery, of Paris, once proffered to a delighted world—is one of these staples. Yet sole to be delicious must be fresh. Which means that its average consumption in the big house—again the delightful law of averages thrusts its finger into the management of a large hotel—must be figured out very carefully and just the right

quantity to meet it ordered each twenty-four hours. This would be easy enough if the New Haven Railroad did not have a way of breaking down occasionally in the passing of a winter and thus delaying the Boston fish-train immeasurably, and so, in turn, upsetting the consumption of *filet de sole à la Marguery,* in The Waldorf-Astoria. It is part of Kast's job to be guarded against emergencies such as this.

Sole will keep—after a fashion. Caviar will not keep—after any fashion, whatsoever. It is one of the nightmares of any hotel-steward's existence. And yet it is an immensely popular dish with the patrons of any high-grade restaurant. The finest grade of it is fresh Beluga, taken from the great white sturgeon of that name and which, served at $2.50 a portion—or thereabouts—sometimes has a tendency toward converting a thrifty guest into a Bolshevik. Yet to the kitchens of the hotel it comes in three-pound tins, costing from twelve to fifteen dollars a pound. True it is that only a few ounces of the delicacy go to make a portion for service; but unless the orders come in quickly few of them can be served out of the one can; the rest of

it must be thrown away and the profit of the orders that have been served is quickly overbalanced.

Therefore, despite the high prices of a specialty dish like this, it is upon such as these that the hotel makes its restaurant profits—if it makes any at all. It is the policy of some houses—among these, The Waldorf-Astoria—to operate their restaurants to break even or a little better with their costs—and to rely for their main profits chiefly upon the sale of their rooms. But even then certain dishes must be sold at an actual loss—butter and meats are among these—and the balance made up on the profits of other dishes. Coffee as served to you upon the tables of the Waldorf-Astoria may mean as high as a thousand percent profit to the hotel, a profit which presently is dissipated in the actual loss on other dishes which are placed before you. . . .

*

But enough of this. I am trying to tell you the story of the upbuilding and the operation of The Waldorf-Astoria, and not entering upon any economic dissertations upon the basic problems of hotelkeeping in general. . . . Foodstuffs for

the big hotel at Thirty-fourth Street and Fifth Avenue are coming to it at almost every hour of the day. There must be abundant preparations for their reception. The question of proper and sufficient refrigeration is one of the greatest construction problems of the modern hotel in America. Even the remarkably far-visioned mind of George C. Boldt, well schooled in every practical problem of hotel-keeping, could not quite foresee the enormous future necessities for his hotel in this regard, and already we have seen how in its first summer season—that of 1893—the kitchens of the original Waldorf had to be torn apart and rebuilded—at great trouble and expense. Here was The Waldorf pioneering; here, again, more modern houses profiting by the expensive lessons that it had to teach itself. Yet the upshot of it all has been that today The Waldorf-Astoria has the largest kitchen area for each guest of any hotel in New York; and more than ample ice-box capacity to boot.

Into these huge ice-boxes—there are more than a baker's dozen of them upon the kitchen floor in the basement of the house—goes a great proportion of its supplies. Rigorous care is used,

of course, in the separation of the various foodstuffs; meats into this box, vegetables into that, fruit into still another. Seafood, of course, must have separate provision for its storage, and so oysters, and also clams, apart from other forms of seafood. . . . The provender once received at the back doors of the hotel, is quickly checked by the accounting force of the steward's department and rushed to the various refrigerators. There it is put away on long shelves as neatly and as compactly as in any well-run butcher's shop, or grocer's—quarters of beef and canned partridges from the Argentine (two plump-breasted birds to the can), odd cheeses and standard, fine fresh turkeys and fresh mackerel caught but a few hours before somewhere just off Ambrose Lightship; vegetables and flour and condiments and endless dozens of canned goods. They are canning nearly everything in the world these days—up in Maine, corn on the cob; and down in the West Indies, sugared grape-fruit. And excellently.

*

From the steward to the chef. . . .

Eugene Thomann is the chef of The Waldorf-

Astoria. It is needless to say that he is a Frenchman and that he was trained in the best restaurants of Paris. I shall depart from journalistic precedent far enough, however, not to state his salary. It is enough for you to know that it is set at a high enough figure to make many a white-collared minor executive of a bank turn fairly green with envy. Of the fifteen hundred employes of The Waldorf-Astoria, some 250 are within his command—men and women, in a vast variety of tasks. They come and leave in shifts. There is not an hour in the twenty-four when the big kitchen is entirely empty; someone is forever at the ranges or swabbing at the floors or tables.

The first rule of this kitchen is cleanliness. The Waldorf-Astoria was the first hotel in New York, if not in all the land, to throw its kitchen open to its patrons; and at any hour of the day. Its first proprietor was as proud of that great room, immaculate in its shiny white tile, its eternally-scrubbed tables and its brilliant flood of constant illumination as he was of any of his gaily-decorated state apartments far aloft. And that is saying very much indeed.

I shall not take you into the mechanical intricacies of this huge stomach of a huge hotel; they are too nearly unending. Now I shall lay bare for you the details of Chef Thomann's job. An entire book might be written upon this alone. It is enough to say that when Thomann serves chicken there is no small boy at a table who is compelled to accept the neck—and politely smile about it. There are no choices in the portions. The chef must be Solomon-like in his meticulousness about the size of his offerings. You cannot go to The Waldorf-Astoria today and have a spoonful of lyonnaise potatoes and tomorrow receive a deluge of them. There are wise folk who honestly believe that we have carried our policies of standardization in America almost to excesses but they are not the folk who have tried to serve five thousand hungry people a day. So today, the hotel-chef who can really and scientifically standardize his portions of food, so that both he and the house are free from the suspicion of showing partiality towards certain patrons, is worth his high salary.

Another problem of the chef is also that of the housewife—the eternal question of the "left-

overs." Obviously the fate of that chicken neck —of 350 chicken-necks each twenty-four hours— is the soup-pot. That is easy. Some other things are not so easy. For instance, no one as yet has worked out an efficient and palatable use of Beluga caviar, after it has come to a point in the open can where it can no longer be served upon the table as fresh caviar. That is a dead loss—which is one of the very largest reasons why the retail selling price of fresh Beluga caviar must be kept at so high a figure.

Hash is, of course, an apparent destination for left-overs, both of chicken, of beef and of lamb; perfectly good tid-bits but not large enough for proper service by themselves. And because "hash" as a word has come to possess an unpleasant, although highly unfair, significance to many hotel patrons, it is wondrously camouflaged under other titles. The Scotch word "collops" is one of the simplest of these; a "ragout" is another; "croquettes" a third. What is in a name, anyway?. . . . I always, myself, order hash and know that in any well-ordered hotel I am getting a clean, sanitary, appetizing dish; to say nothing of having done my own small part toward the

proper economy of life. We Americans are called, and rightly, the most wasteful people upon the earth. And nowhere more so than in our eating. Our garbage-cans carry away food which, if rescued at the proper time and cleverly prepared, would have assuaged the appetities of no end of hungry folk. The Waldorf-Astoria kitchen aims to be economical. It tries not to be a waster; not alone in its own interest but in that of its patron. If it could not run an economical kitchen it would be compelled to raise greatly its charges to him.

So scorn not the chicken-wing that comes with the rice; nor yet the deviled beef-bones with the fine rich sauce. Both are part of Chef-General Thomann's fine strategy of unending campaign. Chicken-and-ham pie—hot or cold—they are for him and The Waldorf-Astoria real military triumphs. A goulash of giblets. . . . Chicken *á la bonne femme*. . . . *Vol-au-vent*. . . . But here, this is no menu-card. Nor yet a cook-book. This is the history of The Waldorf-Astoria. . . .

Occasionally there comes to the house a poor soul who scowls at these very names; growls at the waiter who even dares suggest them. Poor

soul, indeed. Perhaps in his day and generation he has feasted too well upon *vol-au-vent* and Chicken á la Maryland. His interior department is upon strike. His diet has been limited. Yet even if he be one of those souls who craves the simplest sort of primal food-stuffs—perhaps a lecturer or a writer upon hygiene—it makes no difference. He is a guest of The Waldorf-Astoria. That is enough. The Waldorf-Astoria bows to his bidding, as deferentially and as loyally as if he were one of those brave souls who in these after-Volstead days demands—and receives —rich terrapin from its well-stocked larders.

Under his nose a well-trained waiter slips menu-cards printed in phrases fairly unfamiliar to high-livers. It speaks of starches and albumens, of glucose and of vitamines. And opposite each simple dish it prints the calories—the heat units of their food-value. Through a schedule such as this the dieting guest wanders—perhaps with a pencil and a paper that he may the better calculate his calories as he composes his meal. He orders what he needs or what he wants —and he gets it. Unusual cereals, gluten-bread —they are all being carried for him in The Wal-

dorf's pantries. This is a modern hotel's service to its patrons. I once ordered ice-cream for breakfast at The Waldorf-Astoria—in the sanctity of my own room, however—and received it, with no more evidence of surprise and interest on the part of the waiter than if I had ordered bacon and eggs. One patron always demands a cold boiled potato and a glass of vichy for his matutinal meal. His order excites no comment in the kitchen. . . . The Waldorf-Astoria serves. Serves courteously and quickly and with as much attention to fine detail as is humanly possible. It is part of its rôle in life—and it endeavors to live up to its rôle.

Standing beside the chef, the steward, the *maître d'hotel,* is another field-marshal of the hotel organization. Only this general is in skirts. The housekeeper's job is peculiarly a woman's task. Only a woman can meet its peculiar problems. It calls for eternal perseverance and eternal patience. It is a woman's job, preëminently. And yet there is hardly one woman in a hundred thousand that can fill it. The Waldorf-Astoria has one of them. Her name is Nora

Foley and she has been with the Boomer organization for ten years.

Miss Foley's jurisdiction extends not merely over the eleven hundred bedrooms of the house, but over all of its public rooms as well. She is responsible both for their cleanliness and for their general upkeep. . . . To help her in all of the details of her great task, she has an assistant housekeeper upon each guest-floor of the establishment. She also works in constant and close coöperation with the floor-clerks on each of these floors, even though they do not report to her and she has no authority over them whatever. There are plenty of others over whom she has very full authority, however—maids, and cleaners and housemen. Approximately 280 of the fifteen hundred workers upon the all-year staff of the house come under her department. And the most of these are engaged in the hard and unending physical labor of keeping several miles of hallway and whole acres of rooms scrupulously clean —in the heart of a metropolitan city! Every sort of mechanical device—compressed-air, electric sweepers and the like—are provided to ease their labors. But when all is said and done, there is

nothing like human elbow-grease for bringing absolute cleanliness, of any sort.

As has just been intimated, cleaning is but a portion of Miss Foley's painstaking duties. Upkeep is quite as important a one. No housewife ever has to contemplate the constant—both the usual and the unexpected—repairs that a hotel housekeeper forever faces. The wear and tear upon furniture and carpets is terrific. The lack of regard for hotel furnishings that the average hotel-guest feels is notorious. Even in a hotel of high quality, such as The Waldorf-Astoria, can this be noticed. The answer is that repair and refurbishing must become part of the hotel's job —in the special province of the housekeeper— and become part of its cost of operation, for which the public eventually must pay. Gross offenses, breakage and wilful destruction of furniture, can be—and invariably are—assessed upon the offending guest. Yet, in the long run, these isolated instances form but a small proportion of the hotel's great annual bill for upkeep.

So through a thousand rooms of The Waldorf-Astoria—public and private—daily goes Miss Foley on endless quest. She has trained her eyes

to a camera-like exactness. A tiny tear in a curtain, a broken leg of a chair, a deep gash across a dresser—carefully she makes written note of each of these details. Does the room need a general overhauling? Or the services of a painter? Miss Foley notes these things as well. And when she returns to her office upon the twelfth floor of the hotel—close to the center of her bailiwick—she sets in movement the mechanism of the machinery to remedy them. The engineer is asked to send up the house-painter for Room 5—; the house-plumber is requisitioned for that tiny but annoying leak in the bathroom of Room 8—. Her list daily runs to a considerable length. There is furniture to be repaired and refinished, new curtains always to be made, brass-beds to be remetaled, carpets repaired and relined, lamp-shades adjusted and remade, new bulbs for their lights. These are the stable renewals—the unusual ones run to infinity.

*

In addition to this daily inspection of the house, there is an annual one each spring in which the housekeeper makes note of any larger

repairs or renewals that are to be made in the forth-coming summer season. Summer for The Waldorf-Astoria, like all the high-grade hotels of the Fifth Avenue district, is the quietest season of its year. For that season Miss Foley reserves her more elaborate requests: plastering, papering, complete painting, nickeling bath-room-fixtures, perhaps entirely new plumbing or entirely new furniture. Aside from some of the historic show-pieces that Boldt installed, there is but little of the furniture of his day and generation remaining in the sleeping-rooms of The Waldorf-Astoria. In practically all of its rooms its furnishings are quite as modern as those of the newest hotel in the town. It has age, yet it seemingly has found the secret of eternal youth. Which, being further clarified, means that in the course of an average summer from 350 to 400 rooms will be more or less completely refurnished. In this way the entire house is freshened and brought up-to-date each three years.

This is a great task, even for an efficient staff. Take the item of carpets, for a single instance: Five thousand yards of new floor-coverings are needed each year for the bedrooms of the house

alone; another 2500 yards for the halls; and still an additional 1500 yards for the restaurants and public rooms. The average life of one of the big oriental rugs upon the floors of a much-traveled public room is but five years. The great blue rug in the palm court of the Astoria has lasted six. But it is a decided exception. Linen is purchased by the ton, rather than by the dozen or even by the gross. In the rooms and in the linen closets of the house there must be at all times close to six thousand face-towels, and in the restaurants about the same number of napkins. Other linens are furnished in proportion. Any good house-keeper in a private home knows for herself the unending renewals that are necessary to such equipment. . . .

*

In addition to all of these duties of renovation —performed in a systematic way and under the check and control of well-devised accounting systems—the house-keeper of The Waldorf-Astoria finds that she must be a good deal of a hostess, as well. It is a part of the duties of her assistant upon each floor to call upon each guest soon after

he or she is roomed to make sure if there are any little adjustments or courtesies that will help to make his stay more comfortable and enjoyable. If the use to which it is constantly put is any indication, this is a much-appreciated feature of the house's service. And a guest who asks one time for some especial courtesy—an extra pair of blankets or a Morris chair, possibly—probably will find them furnished automatically upon the occasion of his next arrival. This also is Waldorf-Astoria service.

Sometimes requests for service of this sort run to fairly extreme lengths. No matter the problem before her, Miss Foley takes it as part of her day's work. She believes that the guest is honestly entitled to his personal idiosyncracies, and that the hotel should go to every length to gratify his desires. As an evidence, she did not think it at all unreasonable that one woman guest of the house asked for the following changes in the equipment of her room:

To make space for her luggage she wanted a single bed instead of the double one with which the room was already supplied.

She wanted pillows that were stuffed very full.

For her use the contents of three pillows were taken out and crowded into two casings.

She wanted brand-new blankets.

The dresser had to be changed to give her one with drawers that had partitions.

Two extra wardrobes were furnished before one sufficiently large to meet her demands was found. (This was in addition to the regular ample closet space of the room.) Both the wardrobe and the closets had to be equipped with special hooks (bought especially for her) and put in place by the house carpenter according to her personal plan for taking care of her clothes.

This was not all. It was but the beginning. . . . Madame demanded electric bulbs of high extra power. They were purchased and put in place for her.

She obtained an extra lamp, while the "goose-neck" fixture on the desk was changed to an ornamental sort, with a silk shade.

A metal waste-basket replaced one of wicker-work.

She was short, so the chairs of the room were cut down.

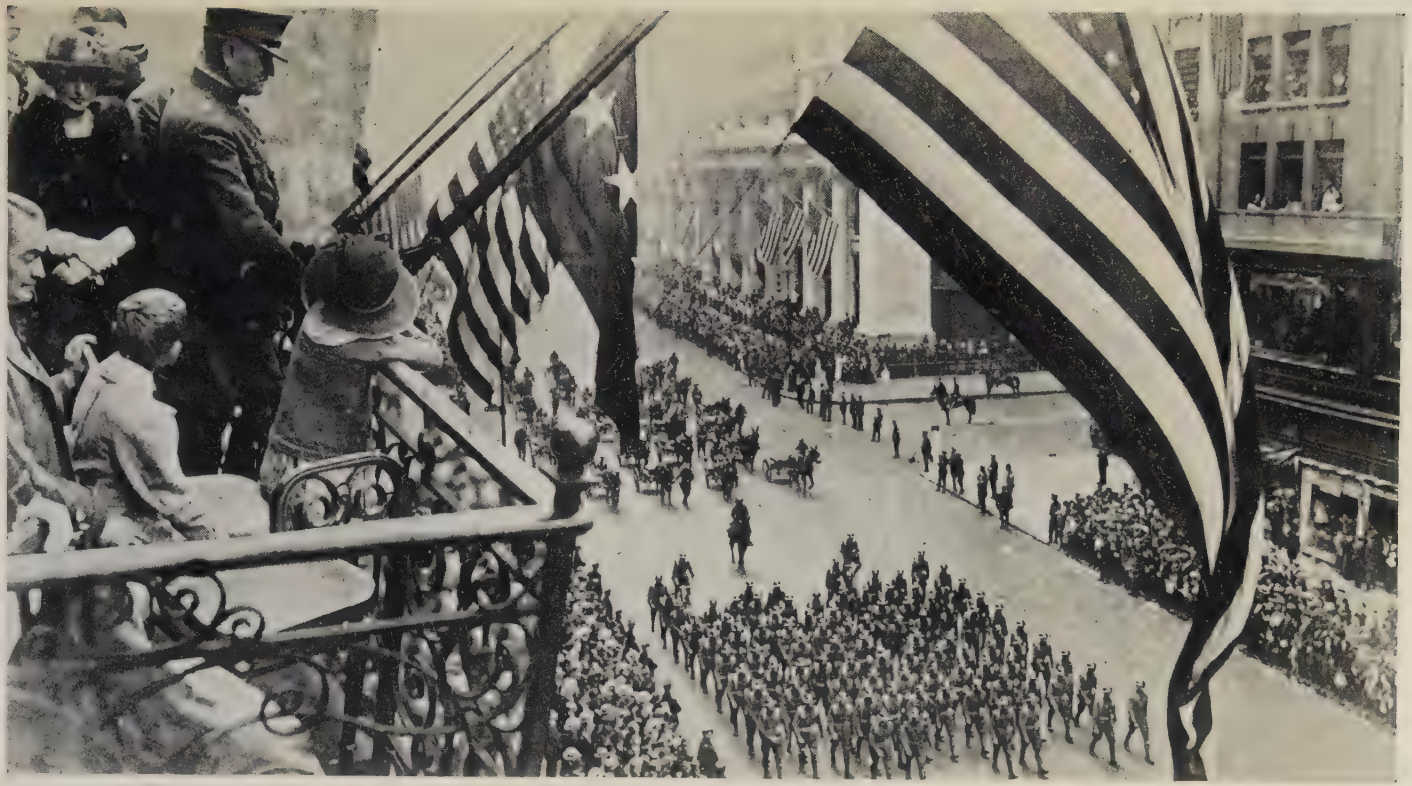
And finally, special rugs were made for the

bathroom, so that its floor would be entirely covered.

The Waldorf-Astoria aims to serve!

This woman guest was not so unusual in her requests—she simply is recalled as one who had several of them. There are others, too; sentimental folk who want the pictures upon the wall entirely changed—"some nice old-fashioned subjects preferred, if you please"; the lady with the peering *lorgnons* demands a special pattern of curtain for her windows. She stays but a fortnight. But she gets the curtains that she wishes. Waldorf-Astoria service!

People who must have brass beds are forever being put in wooden-bedded rooms. And the reverse. The beds are changed. The Waldorf-Astoria aims to please. . . . Linen sheets instead of cotton. Cotton sheets instead of linen. Slumber pillows. No pillows. Extra towels. No towels. . . The human animal is hard to please; and never harder than when he is stopping in a hotel—but Miss Nora Foley does not say that. Miss Foley says nothing; she smiles politely and sees to it that the most *outrè* wish on the part of a patron becomes the very thing



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GENERAL PERSHING REVIEWING THE VICTORY PARADE FROM A BALCONY OF THE WALDORF-ASTORIA

for which her hotel was builded especially to provide. . . .

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So far, and we have said but little about the mechanical equipment of The Waldorf-Astoria. Have we not already quoted the railroad president who said that ninety-five percent of a railroad is the men who work it; the rest is but dust and rust. The same thing, to a very large extent, is true of a modern hotel. Yet the restless mind of George C. Boldt was never happier than when it was working out some curious mechanical device for the better operation of his super-tavern. The intricate pneumatic tubes from the main offices of the Astoria to the floor-clerks far above —forerunners of the modern telephone—were one of his especial delights. The quaint device for showing the room-clerk at his reception desk the direction from which the wind is blowing is another. Carriage-calls, light-controls, time-clock controls, hushed but authoritative automatic buzzers—in all of these contraptions (many others, too) he showed the enthusiasm of the perpetual boy that he was at heart.

It is perhaps as great a tribute as could pos-

sibly be found to his thorough grasp of any problem that was close to the operation of the hotel in which he had such unending pride, when it is stated that twenty-five years after the completed Waldorf-Astoria had been opened, a committee of expert engineers was sent two years ago by General du Pont to examine its engine-room and other mechanical details, and found that even today this equipment could hardly be bettered.

*

I shall not run the risk of boring you by attempting too detailed a description of the mechanical equipment of the hotel. Any way, this feature of the structure is not radically different from that of similar great structures in other lines of business; theaters, office-buildings, department-stories, apartment-houses and the like, save possibly in the single item of refrigeration.

Already we have seen the good use that the chef makes of The Waldorf's baker's dozen of huge refrigerators. It is hardly necessary to add that in this day and age no ice goes into the boxes. Instead, in each of them, as well as in those of the pantries upon the banquet-floor, the guest-

floors and elsewhere, there are coils of pipe, large and small, constantly ice-encrusted by a chemical process. Where actual ice is required—in the service of water and other drinks—it is obtained by chemical manufacture in a room set aside for this purpose in the sub-basement of the house. Here it is formed into the precise cubes that are the wonder and amazement of every European who comes to the house, or shaven into fine mesh, like a bank of fresh-driven snow. The special refrigerating machinery of the house in addition to keeping all of its many, many ice-boxes constantly below the freezing-point, also furnishes the hotel with about 34,500 pounds of actual ice each twenty-four hours. The quantity varies slightly according to the season of the year.

*

Neither shall I bore you with endless statistics. Perhaps it is enough for you to know that in the great sub-basements of the hotel are the tireless engines that furnish it its light and power, and the great batteries of boilers that give these engines their essential energy, an underground kingdom of which the sovereign is Chief Engineer Ezra Bingham. The furnaces, situated

under Astor Court and quite apart from the hotel, itself, burn from 10,500 to 11,000 gallons of fuel oil a day, in addition to which fuel must also be furnished to the various ranges of the kitchens. The heating of the hotel is accomplished very largely through the exhaust steam from its engines.

At the time of its installation The Waldorf-Astoria possessed the finest private electric station in the world. Even today it amply meets every demand upon it. With a capacity of 4000 horse-power it lights the entire house, more than 25,000 lamps, save for a brief time in summer when it is closed down for overhauling and current taken from the city conduits. It does more. It operates the laundry, which washes and dries more than 80,000 pieces of linen daily. (The laundry for the clothing of the patrons of the house is entirely separate and no machinery whatever is used in it.) It drives the thirty-four elevators and the machinery for the various shops that cluster in the sub-basement. . . . Here is done the heavier repair work of the house. Here keys are ground and reground, and furniture completely rebuilt and reupholstered. There is a

carpenter's shop and a plumber's, and an electrician's and a painter's. Few indeed are the jobs that the house cannot accomplish within its own walls.

*

From sub-basement to the top-floor of the house—nearly three hundred feet closer to heaven—one finds the "behind-the-scenes" of The Waldorf-Astoria. The shop of the clock-tinker is in the sub-basement and that of the head valet (completely equipped for every sort of tailoring and carrying all the emergency needs of forgetful man upon his travels) is up under the roof. There is a photographer's studio under that roof. And a dentist's offices. The hotel has its resident physician. We have already seen the drug-store, whose doors are only closed at the midnight hour. There are two barber-shops; one for guests and one for employes. There are clubs all the way up and down the building; from the Traffic Club in the basement to the elaborate quarters of the Ohio Society upon the fifteenth floor.

The Waldorf-Astoria is in itself a city—and no mean city, at that.

CHAPTER XII

THE FUTURE OF THE WALDORF-ASTORIA

WHAT is to be the future of The Waldorf-Astoria?

Time—and time alone—can answer that question. George C. Boldt had a way of saying that forty years was the measure of the life of a first-class hotel in the city of New York; at any rate, as a really first-class hotel. But his estimate was gauged and largely fixed upon the ceaseless uptown growth of Manhattan. This factor has now been changed—to a very large degree. The business section of New York which has been in steady and rapid progress northward upon the island of Manhattan has now approached and touched the southerly edge of Central Park. That great open space forms a natural and a very real barrier to it. To split upon the two

sides of the Park obviously is not going to be very satisfactory to business. . . .

The only answer is that the great business section of Manhattan Island—its retail shops, its hotels, its theaters, its wholesale stores—must, in the main at least, remain south of Fifty-ninth Street. It must seek a more intensive and a more scientific use of the locality to which it has arrived within the past quarter of a century. Already it has begun to work toward this end.

Other factors have interjected themselves into the situation—the placing of the rapid-transit subways, the multiplication of bridges and tunnels across and under the Hudson and East Rivers, and last, but not least, the building of the great Pennsylvania Station at Thirty-third Street and Seventh Avenue. Some wise old souls regarded the opening of that station about a dozen years ago as a fairly chimerical project. They did not anticipate, perhaps, that within a decade the traffic through that important passenger terminal would have more than doubled. They did not dream that across from it there would be builded the largest hotel in all the world; and that to the immediate south of it

would be created the center of the vast garment industry of New York—all to the tremendous relief of Fifth Avenue.

All of these things have been great factors in the future of The Waldorf-Astoria. Considering them in their real importance it now really begins to look as if the hotel and retail shopping section of New York was to "stay put" for a considerable number of years at any rate, and the hotel that was the creation of the heart and soul of George C. Boldt would remain in the very midst of it.

The house itself seemingly was builded for all time. Since the completion of its final half, many other palatial hotels have sprung up upon the island of Manhattan—the St. Regis, the Plaza, the Gotham, the Vanderbilt, the Biltmore, the Ritz-Carlton, the Pennsylvania, the Commodore, the Ambassador—the list runs to a considerably further length. Most of these have been built upon the success of The Waldorf-Astoria. Very truly has that super-tavern been called "the mother of hotels." Yet the mother holds her own amongst her children. Middle age has only served to bring her great dignity, to add to the

soft maturity of her beauty. Her generously-sized public rooms are as lovely as they were on the day that they were first opened. The furnishings and decorations have been vastly modernized. The Waldorf-Astoria has been kept in the forefront of all her children.

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The answer to rumors of recent years that the historic hostelry was to be closed as a hotel and either torn down or devoted to other forms of business came in the summer of 1924 when it was announced that the property had passed in title into the hands of The Waldorf-Astoria Realty Corporation, headed by General Coleman du Pont and Lucius M. Boomer, backed by such well known citizens of New York and Philadelphia as W. W. Atterbury, Leroy W. Baldwin, M. C. Brush, Robert K. Cassatt, L. L. Dunham, Percy H. Johnston, William C. Sproul, E. T. Stotesbury and John R. Todd. This corporation is definitely committed to the continuance of the property as a hotel.

More than this. . . . It proposes gradually to reconstruct The Waldorf-Astoria and render

it vastly more modern. Some of its plans are very far-reaching, indeed. Perhaps the most elaborate is the scheme to place Astor Court which, as already has been seen, completely separates The Waldorf-Astoria property from the nearest adjoining buildings to it, entirely under a great, vaulted skylight roof of glass and steel, thus creating one of the most magnificent arcades in all New York; an indoor street even comparable with the world-famed Humboldt Gallery in Milan.

For the present this elaborate construction is not to be immediately undertaken. But as the writing of these pages is closing, plans are becoming definite for other reconstructions of The Waldorf-Astoria, hardly less in scope and imagination. The "low corner" of the original Waldorf, at Thirty-third Street and Astor Court, is to be built to the height of the rest of that side of the property, thus adding more than two hundred sleeping-rooms—each with its own private bath—to the thousand rooms that form the original capacity of the house, and so making it one of the very largest hotels of the exclusive *de luxe* type anywhere in the world.

Of even greater interest perhaps, to the long-time Waldorf-Astoria guest—and there are many, many thousands of these—is the plan for the enlargement of the great ballroom, almost doubling its capacity. Care is to be taken that neither the original scheme, murals, decorations nor furniture, shall change in any radical way. The general appearance of this historic apartment is to remain unchanged, absolutely.

Lesser changes there are to be aplenty in the big house. But, once again, none of these to transform its atmosphere or its general appearance to any marked degree. The Oldest Patron can continue to return to it, assured that it still is the old Waldorf-Astoria, breathing forth the hospitable spirit of its founder—the old Waldorf, made thoroughly modern, to meet fully the best canons of hotel operation of today, the entire world over.

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The future of The Waldorf-Astoria?

To prophesy far into the future of any institution in a great and rapidly changing city like New York is sheerest folly. But for a decade

—two decades—three decades—to come, the future of the Waldorf seems assured. It will continue to be the house of good service, the house of good eating, the house of good comfort, of every sort. To the vastness of its acquired prestige it continues to add new laurels. It is one of the few hotels in America that is known internationally.

In 1893, Eulalie, Princess of old Spain, came to stop under its roof; nine years later arrived the affable Henry of Prussia; just yesterday, it seems, came the King and Queen of the Belgians—heroic figures of the most terrible war in history. And upon their heels that boyish young Briton who seems destined to become the reigning monarch of the most powerful kingdom upon the face of the earth. All these from overseas—and hundreds of others.

And from the United States, tens and hundreds of thousands. In the accumulation of the carefully preserved registers of the hotel is the real *Who's Who of America.* There is not a state that is missing in that list; and hardly a tiny town all the way across the land.

*

The future of The Waldorf-Astoria?

The question now is answered. Its future seemingly is as firmly assured as is its past, and of that past you have just had the telling.

THE END